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ABSTRACT

The 12 articles in this publication discuss the following topics: an author's considerations in writing a novel for adolescents; the teacher as fictional character in adolescent literature; such themes of adolescent novels as institutional values, the illegitimate heroine, and the war experience; the importance of a cumulative study of literature in the secondary school; an approach to teaching fiction in the junior and senior high school; and novels by Zane Grey, Norma Klein, M.E. Kerr, Judy Blume, and Paul Zindel. Regular columns of the publication present methods for teaching the junior novel to eighth grade students who read below grade level, ideas for teaching descriptive writing, and samples of students' creative writing. (GW)

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I Wanted to Write a Good Book for Adolescents

by

Wayne Dodd

So I wrote a story about a boy and his dog.

But I also wanted it to be a story about a boy and his father. And about a boy and his girl. And about a boy and (his experience of) death. In short, I wanted it to be about those complexly interrelated segments and experiences our real lives are. I wanted it to be adequate to my own remembered sense of things--not least of death, as it comes to resonate as a fundamental knowledge one has of the world.

I wanted my book to be all these things. A tall order, no doubt. Still, I thought I could--and should--write such a book. But how?

My principal concern in writing A Time of Hunting was to tell a story that quite simply was a time of hunting: not a book about hunting, and the rightness or wrongness of it; not a book that used one kind of hunting to talk about another kind; but a book that, in its very movement and spirit, actually produced the enormous complexity of emotional/moral life an adolescent experiences.

I chose, for various reasons, to make the boy the narrator of the story. His experiences were the ones I wanted to illuminate in their totality. Thus the drawbacks involved in limiting the narration to what an adolescent boy could know and what he could say about it became, actually, an advantage. It tended necessarily to inhibit any tendency to over-mediate the experience; it tended to discourage any stray impulse to dissect and interpret. In short, looking through the boy's eyes made it easier for me to find, imaginatively, sufficiently whole experiences to carry the developing theme of his story, and to achieve a unity of action and significance.

In the completed book, I should add, this unity turned out to be what was hardest to maintain against editorial pressures. In publishing, the tendency to want to make moral/emotional content overexplicit--and therefore unconvincing--is very strong. I'm not sure just why. But I suspect it has something to do with an assumption, a belief, that the minds of children, even of adolescent children, require that the world's content be simplified.

I do not believe that this is so--at least not as concerns the ability to respond to complex gestalts of experience. It may be, to some extent, true if one is thinking of the ability to abstract certain ideas from these gestalts. But that activity of the mind has to do with discursive thinking--and talking--about the content. That ability is, in a sense, acquired.

The capacity to apprehend the world in its humanly complex wholeness, however, seems to be inherent in each of us. From the moment we are born we are faced with enormously complicated intellectual and emotional systems. And something of our success in meeting them can be seen in the fact that somewhere around the second year of life a baby makes that incredible leap of understanding that is language. Each individual lives a life--from the outset--of

encountering these complexities, and absorbing them, and responding to them. What I am concerned with here, however, is the capacity of the individual to take in complex wholes of experience. Indeed I am concerned to remind us that this is the fundamental way we receive the world of immediate experience. Talking about something (discursive reasoning) necessarily takes one thing at a time. But life doesn't. Experience doesn't.

And I think the really good books do not either. One of my favorite definitions of a poet (it's by Theodore Roethke) is that he is someone who is not satisfied with saying one thing at a time. The poet wants to present, in its rich wholeness, some part of the world. He wants a complex of thought/feeling to rise up again--in the reader. He makes it available once more. And if he is successful, that wholeness--what I called the gestalt of an experience--will involve the reader in the unmistakably primary relationship between a person and the world of experience. And then the knowledge it offers will arise from within the reader as, momentarily, his own experience.

This is of course true not only of poetry but of imaginative writing generally. Imaginative writing presents to us, in some moment of clarity, the world and, in a real sense, our very selves. I believe this is as true for us when we are children as when we are adults.

Perhaps the major cause of condescension in books for children is the failure (or refusal) to maintain this complex unity. All too often books for children tend to reduce, to lessen the fullness of the artistic gesture. Or they make overexplicit some of its concerns: in other words, they abstract them and thus render them, as parts of the experience, inauthentic. Paul Hazard says, in his great book Children, Men, and Books, one of the achievements he wants from good children's books is a means whereby children can intuitively find a reverence for all life. Intuitively. That's what I've been talking about: knowing the content from within, knowing it in its interacting wholeness; knowing it, that is, as a complexly single perception.

Of course there are all kinds of ways of writing a book that maintains the integrity of its vision, a book that preserves the moral/intellectual/emotional wholeness of it. I certainly don't mean to suggest that the way of A Time of Hunting is the way. Everyone has his own favorites. I think of several (widely diverse) examples of books for adolescent people which do not condescend to their material, books that offer wholeness.

Consider Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House on the Prairie (the book, not the television series). There are many things to admire in this unassuming work. But I am thinking especially of how the great restless movement of America is caught in the small arc of this book: and the rewards and losses, the joys and griefs of its microcosmic frontier. It offers too the authentic sense of beginning--of starting out, of starting over, of making do and triumphing in the process, or at least holding on. Surely the allure of this book (and of others of Mrs. Wilder) comes in very large measure from the fact that a frontier American economy is actually and wholly present in this small narrative. Present in its small moments--whether in the building of a door or the digging of a well or the getting of a cow or the building of a chimney. It is not idea but living fact.

Or the books that are great moral fables, such as Tolkien's, where the moral dimension of action is always and naturally present. And Kipling's Jungle Book, where in story after story the fable, the story itself, carries the energy and truth of its discoveries. In a fable such as "Spring Running" adolescence is as vitally and experientially present as if it were within ourselves, driving us desperately and despairingly through the jungle with mysterious and disturbing force. But it is in no sense adolescence that has been pared away from the whole it lives in. The whole, here, is humanness itself. And never has Kipling touched more tellingly in these stories on what it is to be human.

And indeed one might cite these same stories as equally apt examples of books that satisfy the other element in Hazard's desideratum for children's books: that they offer a means for finding, intuitively, a reverence for all life. In their own ways they find (and so offer) such reverence, because of the integrity of their vision, the unity of the experience they offer.

In my own book I did want a reverence for life to emerge, and I wanted it to carry the kind of conviction that would come from its having been earned. Thus though A Time of Hunting is, I hope, a book that affirms life, it is also about death and about killing. It is a book of, as I said earlier, hunting. And hunting involves, for the boy, many things simultaneously: questions of pride and money and economic status, of sexual affection, of killing, of pity (for a dog, for a poor unhappy woman, for himself even). What I wanted for all these concerns was the actual sense in the book that they fit together, not as parts of a puzzle, but as parts of a body. I wanted it to be such a unity that whenever you touched any part of it you touched, in the complex moral/emotional experience of the boy, the whole. I wanted the reader to know this whole from within, to feel it declaring itself as a primary fact of experience/perception. I wanted him to know it in the serious and difficult--but surely satisfying--way we know the intractable content of our lives--from earliest childhood on.

Thus I wanted death to be at the moral center of the story, as an authentic metaphor for the fundamental human awareness it presents. Early we take the knowledge of death (and so of life) into ourselves in little moments--little pieces, we might say. These pieces come inside us and lodge in our minds. And in our hearts. And they stay there. They come as birds lying stiff in the side yard or beside the curb; as a dog suddenly--or slowly--dead. As a friend or schoolmate gone out of the light. As a relative, a member of the family, vanished utterly.

I wanted this knowledge in my book, and I wanted it to come into the book in those powerful little pieces, linking the book's concerns in naturally complex ways. I wanted reverence for all life to arise from A Time of Hunting as an authentic discovery of moral/emotional wholeness. I wanted a book that was never satisfied with saying one thing at a time. A book that was always, and at every point, about hunting, and love, and killing, and compassion, and adolescent development, and dying. And living. A book that offered the gestalt complexity of the human experience of these concerns. I wanted a book, simply, that did not reduce or condescend.

And so I wrote a book about a boy and his dog.

Ohio University, Athens

The Teacher in Selected Fiction for Adolescents

by
Hazel K. Davis

The teacher as a fictional character has always been fair game for novelists and short story writers. Ichabod Crane with all his inadequacies lives on to be discovered by each succeeding generation. "Our Miss Brooks" of radio days was the teacher everyone wished he had had. Teachers have been the main characters on several TV situation comedies in the past few years with roles ranging from the super-teacher who does everything right and knows everything to the completely inept, insecure, incompetent individual. How about in fiction for adolescents? Are teachers appearing as characters there? If so, what sort of image is being presented? Or are there several images? This study is an investigation of the image of the teacher as presented in selected fiction for adolescents written since 1966.

Only those books which had a teacher as a character or those which described teachers were read. Of the dozens of books written in this ten year span, sixteen were selected. After the novels were read the thirty-eight teacher characters were placed in four categories which were: The Teacher as Negative Influence, The Teacher as Abnormal, The Teacher as Incompetent, and The Teacher as Positive Influence. The first three are basically negative categories, and most of the thirty-eight teacher characters fall into these areas. Several were both negative and positive teacher characters and were placed in both categories with supporting statements from the novels. Only sixteen of the thirty-eight teacher characters were positive influences on the main characters.

The "negative influence" category includes those teachers who are destructive, malevolent influences on the main characters, those who are hypocritic concerning their words and actions, and those who react to the main character with dislike and malice.

In The Fog Comes on Little Pig Feet by Rosemary Wells Rachel is daydreaming in English class. Hoping to catch her off guard Miss Sampson asks her what the motto "Theirs is not to reason why, Theirs but to do or die" means to her. When Rachel does know the meaning, the title, and the author of the poem Miss Sampson becomes enraged and accuses Rachel of trying to show off and demands that she memorize the whole poem over the weekend (New York: Avon, 1972, p. 125).

The headmistress at the school, Miss Pick, is in charge of scheduling. Rachel wants to be a concert pianist so she asks for more time to practice the piano. Miss Pick does not think Rachel's reason is sufficient for a change in schedule. She refuses her request setting the stage for Rachel's rebellion against all of the school's rules.

In Judy Blume's It's Not the End of the World (New York: Bantam, 1972) Karen has been looking forward to the sixth grade because she will get a certain teacher whom everyone loves. But something has happened over the summer. The teacher has gotten married and now she is a 'witch.' Mrs. Singer will not lend the students milk money when they forget theirs on Monday so they do without milk all week. "She says it is our responsibility to remember and if we don't, we have to suffer the consequences." (p. 15) This in itself is reasonable enough, but when Karen forgets her money she dislikes Mrs. Singer even more. Mrs. Singer

also lectures the class practically daily about their learning to behave like sixth graders and about having good manners. "Debbie says if Mrs. Singer sprays hair stuff on herself once more this year she's going to report her to the principal. Imagine a teacher spraying herself in front of the class and then telling us we have no manners. I will be so glad to be rid of her." (p.159)

In M.E. Kerr's If I Love You Am I Trapped Forever? (New York: Dell, 1973) the coach is an extremely negative character in most respects. He seems to hate the boys he coaches and yells curses at them, even strikes them. He drinks, comes to the games drunk most of the time, has a love affair with one of the student's mothers, breaks the husband's nose, and leaves town in the middle of the school year. In Alan's words, "Now he was just this slob, going gradually fat, cantankerous and trigger-tempered, with coffee stains on his trousers and buttons off his sports coat." (p. 24)

Mr. Alvarado in Hey, Dummy by Kin Platt (New York: Dell, 1971) is the most destructive teacher character studied. He asks the students to write an essay. Neil writes his about a retarded boy he has met. The class laughs at Neil's account of "the dummy." Mr. Alvarado becomes very angry and lectures the class on their inhumanity and ignorance for laughing at a mentally retarded person. He condemns Neil for writing such an essay and says he must write another essay; he must understand his subject. So Neil goes off to try to understand the dummy.

Neil spends a lot of time with the dummy, but his parents forbid him to bring Alan home with him. He goes to Mr. Alvarado, who lives in the barrio with the other Chicanos, to ask his advice. Mr. Alvarado tells him, "I can appreciate your sympathy but I don't recommend your taking Alan's problem. Frankly it's too much for you. Perhaps it might be better for you and your family if you sort of eased off, disengaged. . . ." (p. 99) With no help from Mr. Alvarado or his parents, Neil is left to deal with the dummy alone. Neil begins to call the dummy by his first name, Alan. When Alan is about to be attacked by a mob who thinks he has killed a little girl, Neil rescues him and takes him to Mr. Alvarado for advice. Mr. Alvarado is very upset and refuses to allow Neil to stay or to give any help.

> The first thing you'll do, of course, is get him out of the barrio. I can't afford to get mixed up in anything like this. It could cost me my job. Understand? They'd drop me like a hot potato. The Board would be only too happy to make me a scapegoat. I'm the only Chicano with tenure in the entire school district. And I've got to protect fellow Chicanos, too. Get him away, do you hear? That's the first thing you must do. What you're doing is wrong. It's against the law. . . .
>
> Make sure you're not seen with him in this neighborhood by any of the Los Angeles police. They'd start raiding every house immediately as an excuse to dig up suspects. My God! Something like this could set us back ten years--lose us all we've been fighting for. (p. 131-132)

Neil leaves but thinks, "I was never going to come to Mr. Alvarado again for any kind of advice." (p. 132)

Neil runs away with Alan ending up in an alley behind a grocery store where Neil steals some discarded food. The nighwatchman discovers them, and

while they're trying to run away, shoots--killing Alan. Neil then goes into shock and decides it makes more sense to be like Alan--"No brains, no feelings. I'm going to try that. Instead of turning on, I'm turning off. Hey Dummy, I thought. Now this will teach you. Even Mr. Alvarado didn't think it was catching. Now this will teach you." (p. 169)

Mr. Alvarado encourages Neil to become involved but gives him no help when he becomes too involved with Alan and his problems. Thinking only of his own job and the Chicano problem, he forces Neil to take on the responsibility of a problem that is far too big for him to handle. Neil's turning off at the end of the book is a result of many factors, but the major responsibility must be placed on Mr. Alvarado.

The "abnormal" category contains those teacher characters who are objects of ridicule because of aberrant behavior or appearance. One interesting feature of this category is that the twelve abnormal teachers are from only three novels. Two of the novels are by the same author, Paul Zindel. The teacher in these two novels is almost always an abnormal person whose presence or mention is strictly for a ridiculous effect.

In Zindel's The Pigman (New York: Dell, 1968) substitute teachers are said to "be mildly retarded" (p. 9) and are fair game for playing tricks on, such as rolling apples up the aisles. Miss Reillen, the librarian, is called the Cricket. Lorraine tells why. "Miss Reillen is a little on the fat side, but that doesn't stop her from wearing these tight skirts which make her nylon stockings rub together when she walks so she makes this scraaaaaatchy sound. That's why the kids call her the Cricket." (p. 11) Lorraine thinks maybe Miss Reillen has grown out of her clothes and just can't afford to buy more. Maybe she has a sick mother like Miss Stewart, the typing teacher, who keeps "her mother in this bed right in the middle of the living room. . . ." so she won't feel she's missing out when company comes. (p. 15) Mildly grotesque. John is disgusted by Miss King, the English teacher, who tries to use up-to-date expressions like he's "such a card," which John says "sounds ridiculous coming out of the mouth of an old-maid English teacher who's practically fifty years old." (p. 21)

In I Never Loved Your Mind (New York: Bantam, 1970) Zindel presents another group of outrageous teachers. Dewey and Yvette are getting to know one another and discover they are both high school dropouts. Yvette is describing her school experiences, "And the teachers! My home-economics teacher weighed three hundred and twenty pounds. My guidance teacher was divorced. . . . And my gym teacher was a lesbian." (p. 10)

Dewey and Yvette are out walking later and see a bridge which reminds Dewey of an English teacher he once knew.

> Every time I see that bridge I think of a teacher in my old high school who was studying evenings for a doctorate in English literature, and decided to jump off the middle of the span one day, but the dean of men chased her in his car and caught her as she straddled the railing. I thought she was an inspirational teacher because she was always urging the kids to reach new heights. (p. 56)

When they are hitchhiking to a bar they are picked up by a drunken couple. The man explains that he is a high school teacher and that he had just been stopped by the police and had been given a ticket.

> He reached his hand to his neck and straightened the ugly, loud tie he was wearing. It looked like it was made of the same material as his wife's dress, which was something like curdled corduroy. 'I told the cop I was a teacher. You know --both working for the city. That routine. Usually works. This one gave me a ticket anyway. I didn't say anything while he wrote it out, but when he gave it to me, I checked his name and looked him right in the eye. I said, 'Thanks, Officer Rattray. That's a very interesting name, Rattray. Just in case you ever have kids attending Franklin High, I'll make sure I remember it. I want to be as nice to them as you've been to me.' . . . 'I teach law and economics,' the guy said. (p. 50)

In M.E. Kerr's Is That You Miss Blue? (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) the main teacher character is Miss Blue, a religious fanatic who wears an enormous silver cross around her neck, or as the students say, it wears her. She hangs a picture of Jesus in the bathroom, talks to him, and is certain she has had a visit from him. No one wants to sit at her table during meals, and she is shunned by everyone at school. She is finally dismissed for her aberrant behavior.

Another teacher at the school is Miss Mitchell, the gym teacher, who is in love with Miss Able, the music teacher. They request songs at the evening hymn sings and watch each other while they sing. And then there's Miss Balfour, the school dietician. "She looked around forty. She was a skinny woman who probably wouldn't fare well in a strong wind. She had very black hair, big round blue eyes made up with mascara and eyeliner, and dabs of rouge on her cheeks like a department-store doll." (p. 48) Miss Balfour spends most of her time peeking at herself in the mirror of her compact. "Cardmaker said she belonged to a club called 'The World of Beauty,' and every two months received a huge package containing cosmetic samples. 'She's had her face lifted twice,' Cardmaker told me, 'and she's supposed to be way over sixty.'" (pp. 47-48) There are mirrors in the dining hall and Miss Balfour spends her time at meals watching herself in the mirror on the opposite wall. She sips her coffee "and watched her own expressions and poses." (p. 48)

The "incompetent" category contains those teachers who are inexperienced, inept, or just plain cannot teach. They are not treated humorously, but rather as persons to be pitied or feared.

Miles J. Benedict, Jr., the teacher in Judy Blume's Are You There God? It's Me Margaret (New York: Dell, 1970) is inexperienced. "Poor Mr. Benedict. He was really disappointed. The way he talked to us I got the feeling we made him nervous. Nobody seemed scared of him at all and you should be a little scared of your teacher. Sometimes he just sat at his desk and looked out at us like he couldn't believe we were really there." (p. 45) Later when he forms committees to work on a project without consulting the students about what committee they wanted to serve on, Margaret complains.

> But that sneaky Miles J. Benedict! He said that since he wanted us to work with people we hadn't worked with before he had made up committees already. Well, that's a first-year teacher for you! Didn't he knew that was a bad idea? Didn't he know he was supposed to let us form our own committees? Teachers should never come right out and say they've picked who you should work with. It's bad enough that they fool you a lot by pretending to let you choose a subject when they know all along what you're going to do. But this was ridiculous. (p. 111)

In Jeremy by John Minahan (New York: Bantam, 1973), Jeremy's music teacher's name "was Mr. Howard, a young guy and about as inexperienced and nervous as they come, but I liked him. 'Good morning, class,' he began in his uncertain way. . . . When the girls finished, Mr. Howard hesitated, as usual, as if not knowing what to say. He didn't exactly inspire a hell of a lot of confidence." (p. 16)

Then there is the incompetent Mr. Zamborsky in Zindel's My Darling, My Hamburger (New York: Bantam, 1969) who is the senior advisor, but who is unable to get the group quiet so they can discuss the senior prom. He keeps blowing his whistle and yelling quiet until the president of the class takes over.

Miss Fanuzzi, the sex education teacher, is asked by her class what to do when a boy is trying to go too far while petting. "Miss Fanuzzi knows a lot about puberty and mitosis, but I think she needs a little more experience with men. . . . Miss Fanuzzi's advice was that you're supposed to suggest going to get a hamburger." (p. 6) This advice is not too helpful for Liz who ends up pregnant and has to have an abortion.

In Is That You, Miss Blue? after Miss Blue is fired a man is hired in her place. The only good thing about him is that he's a man and he's young. "He was a young man in his early twenties, the only man ever in residence at Charles School. . . . He was a terrible teacher; he made science about as colorful as a sack of flour." (p. 167)

In Paula Danzinger's The Cat Ate My Gymsuit (New York: Dell, 1974) students try to get other teachers involved in some of their meetings after school, especially a sensitivity session which they call Smedley. The teachers refuse to attend saying "What are you doing? Getting your heads shrunk?" And "My contract doesn't say I have to stay after school past last period." (p. 25)

In Richard Peck's Don't Look and It Won't Hurt (New York: Avon, 1972) the teacher of contemporary world problems is Mr. Peterson, "an individual with a bulbous thinker's brow, who wore slept-in seersucker suits." (p. 38) Mr. Peterson spends most of the time discussing World War II.

> But occasionally, we'd slip back into the present to discuss articles from 'The Week in Review' section of The New York Times. 'You've got to keep current with what's going on in the outside world now!' was Peterson's battle cry. Then in ten minutes, it was June 6, 1944, again, and we'd all be back on Omaha Beach. (p. 38)

The art teacher in the same school is a misfit. Her name is Miss Mergenthaler and

> . . . her philosophy was FREE EXPRESSION if you express what I approve of. Also be creative or I'll flunk you. Also clean out those brushes or I'll jam them down your throat. She never exactly said any of this, but you got the idea. She never exactly said anything. She roared. And she was built like a Mack truck. Strong football players quivered. (p. 69)

She bullies the students in her class into submission. While the students are trying to draw a football player who is an unwilling model for them, she walks around looking at their work.

> All the while, Mergenthaler stalked around the room behind us in her ground-grabber space shoes with arms locked behind her back. I was sweating away over Herb's biceps when a big hand shot over my shoulder and grabbed the paper off my board. Mergenthaler's voice blasted right into my ear. 'START OVER! THAT'S HOPELESS!' which caused general stirring of insecurity around the room. (p. 71)

In contrast to all the negative, distorted, enept, ineffectual teacher characters are the friendly, helpful, competent teachers in the "positive influence" category. Mrs. Singer and Mr. Alvarado who are basically negative characters do have their sympathetic and competent sides. So too does Miss Blue and Miles J. Benedict, Jr. This category covers those teachers who present positive images and those teachers who try to help the main character solve his/her problems, who listens, and counsels as a friend.

Miss Blair, in My Darling, My Hamburger, is a competent teacher. She is not negative or abnormal. She is liked by all the students and is welcomed as a chaperone at the senior prom (and at all the dances) where she dances with the students.

> Dennis and Maggie stopped dancing a moment as Miss Blair did a couple of special spins and a dip. Several other couples cheered her on. They usually did for Miss Blair because she chaperoned all the dances. She always got out on the floor. If it wasn't with Pierre Jefferson, it was some other junior or senior. (p. 55)

There is a Miss Blair in every school.

In Is That You, Miss Blue? there are other teachers besides Miss Balfour, Miss Mitchell and Miss Able. Miss Horton is a young teacher who

> . . . was only a few years out of the University of North Carolina where she'd belonged to Chi Omega sorority, and Cardmaker said that last year she'd tried to work through a petition that faculty could wear pants suits to teach in but APE vetoed the idea with a raging lecture on Maturity. She spent a lot of time in The Caravan and smelled of cigarettes, and sometimes on an evening of gin, too. . . . Miss Horton had a boyfriend named John Bob White, who was up North somewhere studying to be a doctor. (p. 32)

The students all like her and try to get to sit at her table for meals.

Miss Sparrow is the drama teacher who

> . . . was the only member of the faculty who dressed with a great deal of style. She wore fur-lined capes, and scarves with large bold patterns, hats with feathers, and fantastic shoes with toes and heels carved out, wedgies, slippers, a vast assortment. When she wasn't in The Caravan where it was rumored she chain-smoked sixteen cigarettes at one sitting, she was in her room reciting scenes from plays into her tape recorder. (p. 105)

She is rumored to be in love with the Reverend Cunkle, a married man. But this rumor only makes her more acceptable to the students.

Then there's Miss Blue. Although she behaves quite abnormally outside of the classroom, inside the classroom she is a superb teacher. She makes science the most interesting subject in the school. But out of the class she is ignored and made fun of.

The Planet of Junior Brown by Virginia Hamilton (New York: Macmillan, 1971) contains two positive teachers. The first is a teacher who is supposed to be Buddy and Junior's homeroom teacher, but they have cut classes so much they haven't seen her before.

> The teacher eyed Buddy. She was a cool lady. She was black. There was warmth of humor deep down beneath the dark of her eyes. However, she let the humor die away. Obviously she was as tough as Buddy, been around long enough to know all the games. Wise enough, she had come too far and had worked too hard trying to teach something to let one fast-talking kid put it over on her. (pp. 143-144)

She sends them off to the principal's office to be dealt with. The boys skip classes to spend the time with Mr. Pool, the janitor. Mr. Pool was a teacher and is still acting in the capacity toward Buddy and Junior.

> Surely he had been successful in his classroom teaching. Tough, black children of city streets could lay bare their minds in his loud and open classes.
>
> But I lost heart, thought Mr. Pool. I could no longer teach in so rigid a regime. Maybe I was wrong. Things change--has any of it really changed?
>
> Only now, through his work with Buddy Clark and the example of Buddy's devotion to Junior Brown, did Mr. Pool slowly begin to believe in himself again. (p. 13)

When Junior collapses mentally Mr. Pool helps Buddy get him to safety, and the book ends with the possibility that Mr. Pool will help Buddy take care of Junior and the homeless boys of the city.

Mrs. Singer in It's Not the End of the World is not all bad. When Karen wants to take the diorama she has made as a class project home because she thinks it may help bring her parents back together, Mrs. Singer allows her to even though it is on display in the corridor. This certainly doesn't make her a positive influence, but it does show that she is capable of positive acts.

Mr. Alvarado in Hey, Dummy also has a good side. In describing him Neil says, "He happens to be a very good teacher, and knows exactly what he wants. Mostly, he wants us to learn to express ourselves. Communication, he says, is our only hope and without that we're nowhere. It's not hard to believe Mr. Alvarado. He communicates just fine." (p. 32) It is ironic that in the end Neil chooses to stop communicating completely. Mr. Alvarado can be compared to Mr. Pool who helped Junior Brown when he was needed with no questions or reservations. Of course, he did not have as much to lose as Mr. Alvarado.

There is another music teacher in Jeremy, one who gives Jeremy private lessons. At the conclusion of a lesson he talks with Jeremy about his future as a musician. He points out that Jeremy's energies are too divided to ever allow him to be a great musician. He concludes by saying, "Sometimes I think it's a lot easier to be a friend than a teacher." (p. 4)

Mrs. Tompkins, an English teacher in If I Love You Am I Trapped Forever?, gives Alan advice about becoming a novelist. She seems to be a sympathetic character throughout the novel. When the father of one of her students is killed in an automobile accident she does not continue with the regular English class for long. She asks the class to write a composition. "In light of what just happened, I think it might be appropriate to assign a short composition on 'A Father I Know.'" (p. 164) The students willingly begin work on the assignment.

There are two positive teachers in Kristin Hunter's The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou (New York: Avon, 1968). They are Miss Hodges, an English teacher, and Mr. Lucitanno, a music teacher. Each plays an important role in the action of the novel. Miss Hodges agrees to help Lou and her gang to set up a newspaper. She does this after school instead of grading papers, etc. Mr. Lucitanno helps the gang form a singing group and later arranges for instruments. He sees that a recording company listens to them sing. Both he and Miss Hodges, along with other teachers from the school, go to the City Hall to protest the treatment of the gang, and when a gang member is shot by the police, they go to the hospital to give blood. They also bail out gang members who are arrested. Lou admires Miss Hodges as a teacher and one class assignment is described. Miss Hodges assigns the class to write about something that was important to each student. She tells them their efforts may be published. "The class, which normally hated to write, began wielding pencils as if their lives depended on it." (pp. 74-75)

The teacher in Sounder by William Armstrong (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1969) acts as a very positive influence on the boy's life. He aids the boy to learn to want more than what his mother has had to settle for. He serves as an inspiration for the boy from the time he meets him until the book's end. After the death of the father the boy sees that the family has wood and food and then goes back to the school, the only place of hope and inspiration left.

The teacher in Francesca, Baby by Joan Oppenheimer (New York: Scholastic, 1976) also provides a helping hand when it is needed most. Francesca's mother is an alcoholic, her father travels as a salesman and is seldom home, so Francesca must care for the house, her mother, and her younger sister. Miss Handley, the home economics teacher knows about Francesca's home life and gets her interested in a teenage discussion group whose relatives are alcoholics.

When some homework is late she talks to Francesca. "Teachers aren't supposed to have favorites, you know. But we're only human, and sometimes we do. We hide how we feel and try to be fair, of course. I've always enjoyed having you in my classes Francesca. I liked you, your work, your attitude. I still like you." (p. 77) When Francesca has finally made her mother see that she must have help, her mother calls her at school. "The sewing room was empty except for Miss Handley. She came down the aisle quickly, her nice homely face full of concern. . . ." (p. 149) When she hears the good news she hugs Francesca and laughs with her.

Rachel in The Fog Comes On Little Pig Feet finds a friend in Miss Block whom she first dislikes. She meets Miss Block when she skips assembly her first night at the school. "A chunky little woman in a blue-serge suit was staring at me with her arms folded. She had heavy, Coke-bottle spectacles, short black hair, and a very raw-looking complexion. I disliked her instantly. Then I noticed a small cross around her neck, with a slanted gold crossbar running through the stem." (p. 40) Rachel tells her all her problems, and she sympathizes. When Rachel is ready to leave Miss Block says, "You don't mention me, I won't mention you. But if you get into any sort of trouble, just say you were talking to Miss Block." (p. 42) Rachel's schedule change is refused so she goes back to see Miss Block who calls the administration stupid and then smokes--which is against the rules. She urges Rachel to go back to study hall and make as few waves as possible. She would do what she could for her. (pp. 47-48) After much confusion and breaking of rules Rachel finally tells where the girl who has run away from school is hiding. She finds out her parents are going to let her come home. She goes to the library to see Miss Block again. When Rachel asks if she has done the right thing Miss Block answers, "I don't know, she said, and she put her arms around me. For once I didn't mind being touched." (p. 151)

Finally, there's Ms. Finney who appears in The Cat Ate My Gymsuit. She is young, intelligent, innovative, creative, friendly, interested in the students and what they are learning. However, she does not go along with some of the rules and regulations of the school board which proves to be her downfall. She is definitely one of the most influential of the positive characters. Ms. Finney starts the school year late. The first English teacher quit after the first month or so of teaching. Then came a series of substitutes and finally there was Ms. Finney. The class, by now, is pretty good at disruption.

> Ms. Finney just sat there. She was young and wore a long denim skirt, a turtleneck jersey and had on weird jewelry--giant earrings that hung down to her shoulders, and a macrame necklace. She didn't smile or yell or cry or read a paper or do any of the things that teachers normally do when a class gets out of hand. She just sat there and looked at everybody. (pp. 10-11)

When everyone finally decides to be quiet and listen she gives some of her philosophy of teaching. "I decided to be an English teacher because I care about people communicating with people. That's why I'm here. I want to do it and help you all to do it too, as effectively as possible. A poet named Theodore Roethke once said, 'Those who are willing to be vulnerable move among mysteries.' Please let's try to move among mysteries together." (p. 12)

The main character sees that Ms. Finney isn't perfect. "She never got reports back on time, she gave hard tests, and once in a while she got mad. She also did weird things like holding on to a piece of chalk, forgetting what it was and trying to smoke it. Sometimes she let kids get away with too much. But she really tried." (p. 16)

Ms. Finney forms a group that meets after school to help the kids talk about their feelings through group dynamics. She also does all sorts of creative things in her classroom. Then she is suspended from school because she refuses to say the Pledge of Allegiance. The principal says, "And then along comes a teacher who talks about feelings and being in touch with yourself and she doesn't believe in grades and argues at teachers' meetings and doesn't dress like a teacher and won't salute the flag. And I also have to deal with community pressure. Well, I just won't have it." (pp. 51-52)

At the hearing Ms. Finney speaks in her own defense:

> As for teaching differently, that's very true. I'm not at all ashamed of that. I'm hopefully teaching human beings to communicate with one another and to love and respect the English language. I try to do it in ways that will interest and excite students. Everyone complains that children can't and don't read. Well, my students are reading, and their writing has improved. Just check their records. The results are there. Isn't that what's important?. . . As for the Pledge of Allegiance, I choose not to say it. I salute the flag each morning as a symbol of what this country is supposed to be, but I can't say the Pledge. I am sorry to have to say that I don't believe this country offers liberty and justice for all. I will continue to work toward that end, but until I see it happening, I will not say the Pledge. I am a good American. I care about the country and the people in it. (p. 111)

The Board decides to reinstate Ms. Finney, but she resigns because she feels she can no longer be an effective teacher in that particular school. The students at first feel let down but begin to realize that there could be no other answer to the situation. They will not soon forget what Ms. Finney taught them.

One obvious conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that there are more negative teacher characters than there are positive. The negative characters are much more interesting than are the positive ones, which is often true in fiction. For instance, Satan is more interesting than God in Paradise Lost, Iago is more so than Othello. And how about Scrooge in relation to Bob Cratchit? Evil is fascinating. Bad news sells more newspapers than good news. But are these negative teacher images a reflection of the way teachers really are, or are the authors of junior novels using the negative teacher character to appeal to the adolescent audience and thereby sell more books? This question cannot be answered as a result of this study, but a tentative answer might be that it is a little of both. Adolescents often have negative attitudes toward teachers and can identify more easily with the negative attitude of the characters in the novel.

In deciding the importance of the preponderance of negative teacher images one very important question must be kept in mind--from whose point of view are these teacher images presented? Certainly a character who views all adults as negative influences, or who is a school dropout will present the teacher character in a negative light also. In the first category--The Teacher as Negative Influence--each of the central characters is a very negative individual. Rachel (The Fog Comes On Little Pig Feet) has been forced by her parents to attend a private shcool when all she wants to do is play the piano and be back among her own friends. This negative attitude toward the school and everyone in it, of course, colors her views of the teachers in the school. Karen (It's Not the End of the World) is extremely unhappy at home. Her parents are getting a divorce and home life is miserable. Naturally her school experiences would be influenced by her extreme unhappiness and confusion.

Alan (If I Love You Am I Trapped Forever?) begins the novel with everything and has no sympathy for the loser. But by the end of the novel he himself has lost almost everything. Here again divorce plays a part in the confusion of the central character. Alan also falls in love with the older woman who has had an affair with the coach and who completely disillusions Alan when she leaves to join the coach at the end of the novel.

Mr. Alvarado (Hey, Dummy) begins as a positive character, liked and respected by Neil, and gradually through his reactions or lack of same to Neil's involvement with the dummy becomes a negative influence. Neil's attitude toward Mr. Alvarado has changed by the end of the novel after help has been refused to that of "Now this will teach you" when Neil turns off after the dummy's death.

The three novels which are covered in the category--The Teacher as Abnormal--are all first person narratives. The two Zindel novels deal with high school dropouts and potential dropouts. John and Lorraine (The Pigman) have very negative attitudes toward their parents, teachers, and other adults as well as toward life in general. These two could be a younger version of Dewey and Yvette (I Never Loved Your Mind) who are high school dropouts. Again both exhibit very negative attitudes toward authority, parents, fellow co-workers, and even toward themselves. Teachers are fair game.

The main character in Is That You, Miss Blue? has problems but is not a completely negative character. Divorce has forced her into a private school situation where she seems to be surrounded by strange people--the girl in the next room can't talk, her faculty advisor entertains Jesus in her room, and her best friend, a preacher's daughter, breaks as many of the school's rules as she possibly can. Her attitudes toward Miss Blue are ambivalent. She both likes and dislikes Miss Blue, wants to ignore and protect her at the same time.

> Without even knowing her, I sensed she needed protection. Then, and in the future, I would hold my breath when I came upon Miss Blue coping with others, or attending her classes, or just watched her from a distance in church, at chapel, in places where she was most vulnerable. And I will never forget the viselike grip, the strength of it and the willfullness. (p. 18)

For the most part the positive teacher plays a minor role in the junior novels studied. The few exceptions are the teacher in Sounder, Miss Blue, the two teachers in The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou, Mr. Pool in The Planet of Junior Brown, and Ms. Finney in The Cat Ate My Gymsuit. The others exert a positive force, but are not so instrumental in the action of the novels.

What subject the teacher teaches does not have any bearing on this study except that seven of the thirty-eight teachers are English teachers. Three are positive, three are negative, and one is both positive and negative influence. No other subject is represented as much as English, although physical education provides a fairly close second.

Perhaps more emphasis should be placed on the students reading on their own those novels which give a positive image of the teacher. Those novels which give a negative image of the teacher should be presented with adequate discussion of the positive attributes of the teacher. Perhaps another study should be done with adolescents themselves and how they view the teacher image. Their views could then be compared with that which is presented in the fiction for adolescents, with conclusions drawn as to the influence of such fiction on their views.

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# # # #

Norma Klein's Adolescent Novels: The Reversal of the Usual

by

Ken Donelson

In an interview with Lou Willett Stanek, writer Norma Klein stated clearly and concisely her novelistic stance.

> I like the idea of taking a conventional situation and standing it on its head, as it were. . . For instance, in Wolf Man you could say I started with the situation of an unwed mother and her daughter, but really I started with the idea of an unwed mother and her daughter who, instead of feeling oppressed and cast down by her role in society, would consider herself privileged. So it was the reversal of the usual that appealed to me.
> (Arizona English Bulletin, April 1976, p. 28)

That reversal of the usual typifies four adolescent novels, Mom, the Wolf Man and Me (New York: Pantheon, 1972, Avon paperback), It's Not What You Expect (New York: Pantheon, 1973, Avon paperback), Taking Sides (New York: Pantheon, 1974, Avon paperback), and What It's All About (New York: Dial, 1975).

Klein's personal predilections doubtless make these novelistic reversals almost inevitable. Though she has said she is somewhat shy and conventional, she has certainly been drawn to topics which many librarians, parents, and teachers would consider unconventional, possibly daring, and probably controversial in books aimed at an audience of young people. Her influences and beliefs have been openly expressed.

> The political cultural event which has influenced me most as a person and as a writer has been the women's movement. Perhaps it's made me overly sensitive to certain things when I read. Especially with writing for children, I can't put aside the unspoken implications of many books in their slighting attitudes to women or girls. . . I think it's a matter of looking afresh at attitudes to all female characters in a book, not only to the girls who are at the center, but the mothers, the sisters, the aunts. . . But I'm not only concerned with the female characters we are presenting to our young people in their books. I'm concerned with fathers too. I'd like to see more books in which fathers take an active role in the lives of their children, not just in playing sports with them, but in a more intimate basic way. Today I feel many more fathers are doing this so it's really a matter--as it is with other issues too--of books catching up to life. We are still far behind reality in what we decide to present to children, and this is a pity. (Arizona English Bulletin, April 1976, p. 29)

> What draws me most, however, is that I feel the children's book field has been and is still, very much weighed down by taboos on many subjects, on abortion, sex, the human body, etc. I feel one could write a book a year till one was just touching on each of these taboos. As a feminist, I especially want to write for girls, but girls who are active intellectually, who are strong, interesting people. . . I'd like all this to be done nondidactically, humorously in books that are fun to read and I hope not just me but many others will make the same effort since it's so important. We need books where children masturbate, think about their parents sex lives, enjoy the physical sensations provided by their bodies. We need books that are nonpunitive, open, honest. There aren't enough, not nearly. ("Norma Klein," Something About the Author, Anne Commire, ed., Vol. 7, Detroit: Gale Research, 1975, p. 154)

> Many of the books I had read seemed to hardly bother with adult characters at all--they were shadowy, genial figures floating in the background. Or the adult characters, in their stupidity and grossness, were seen by the authors as justification for any kind of idiocy on the part of the juvenile protagonist. I wanted to show parents as intelligent, caring, but also fallible, still growing and developing themselves. I don't believe that to reveal adult weakness to a child is to rob her of a sense of security. In any case, I believe most children are more

aware of the fallibilities of the adult world than most adults would care to acknowledge.
(Norma Klein, "More Realism for Children," Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom, September 1974, p. 131)

The real world frightens many people today. We are living, perhaps even more than in earlier times, in an era of changing values and many people are afraid to deal with those changes in books. They feel children need and expect fixed values, certainty. I think children are not fooled by false certainty. . . They need books which confront some of these new things, even if the outcome isn't always the most reassuring.
(Arizona English Bulletin, April 1976, p. 30)

Her first adolescent novel, Mom, the Wolf Man and Me, largely fulfills Klein's aims stated above. Despite her announced preference for third person narration, Mom is told in the first person by young Brett Levin. The first page not only gets us into the story but it sets the emotional tone for the book that follows. It is Father's Day at school and Mary Jane Wakowski asks Brett a question Brett has obviously heard before--"Where's your father? Did he have to go to work or something?"

"No."

"So, where is he?"

"I don't have a father." You've got to say this just the right way, and, in fact, I was out of practice, because for years I'd always gone to the same school and everybody knew and didn't ask. I don't really mind if they do, but if they haven't for a long time, you'd tend not to think of good, quick answers.

. . .

"Oh, your parents are divorced, I guess," she said.

"Nope," I said.

Her eyes got bigger. "What do you mean? What are they, then?"

"They aren't divorced," I said. "They were never married."

Some days I kind of like going through this routine, even though it might be easier to say "They're divorced," since it wouldn't really matter. But I like seeing that expression on people's faces--sometimes I like it.

"They have to have been married," she said, almost mad. "You couldn't have been born otherwise."

I smiled.
(Avon paperback, pp. 13-14)

Brett's mother, Deborah, is a thirty-one year old photographer interested in current events and ideas and impatient with trivialities and conventional things. Brett has two close friends, Evelyn whose mother desperately wants to get remarried, and Andrew whose conventional family contrasts starkly and not always pleasantly with Brett's unconventional homelife. Deborah's mother and father fall somewhere between the conventional and the avant garde. Into this life walks the Wolf Man (when Brett first sees him all she can really see is his huge Irish wolfhound, Norma). The Wolf Man--his name is Theo--has bright red hair and a large beard, and Brett likes him, even after he first meets Deborah in Washington, D.C. where everyone appears for a protest march. Brett

likes him no less when one Saturday night he stays at the Levin household, and Evelyn and Brett both know that "he and Mom had sexual intercourse." Brett is not horrified by that term because, as she says, "I had learned about sexual intercourse at school, of course." (p. 123) Later, Brett confides to her grandmother about Deborah and Theo's sex life, and Klein uses the scene to establish something about the difference in the lives of Brett and her grandmother and about the way both women, of two quite different generations, understand the term, sexual intercourse.

> I went to Andre's with Grandma. It was Mom's birthday in a few days--she was going to be thirty-two, I think.
>
> "That's pretty old to have a baby," I said.
>
> Grandma got this strange expression on her face as though she felt sick. "Is Deborah going to have a baby?"
>
> "No," I said. "Why?"
>
> "Well, you said..."
>
> "Oh, no." I laughed. It's funny that Grandma doesn't know about sexual intercourse. They probably didn't teach it at school when she was little. I told her about how Mom could have a baby but wouldn't. "She just has sexual intercourse because she enjoys it," I said.
>
> Grandma kept looking around, still with this funny expression. There are some things you can't discuss with Grandma, because she's very nervous. (pp. 130-131)

If Grandma is at least mildly concerned about her daughter's morality or unconventionality, Brett clearly is not, not even when Theo begins to sleep at her house much of the time. Later, Brett senses something is amiss when Theo doesn't come around for awhile, and she goes to see him, only to discover what she already guessed, that he and Deborah had a fight about marriage, the need for marriage, the propriety of marriage, the rightness of marriage between Theo and Mom. To Brett's surprise and horror, but to no intelligent reader's surprise at all, Mom and Theo take the proper way out, perhaps the best and happiest way out for them.

> A week or two later a horrible thing happened. I was sound asleep, when all of a sudden Mom woke me up. She didn't even click on the light, so I could at least see who it was. She said she and Theo were getting married.
>
> I really felt horribly sick. I can't even describe it. At first, I thought she said they had gotten married without even telling me. But to hear that they were going to do it anyway was more than I could believe. I could'nt believe Theo would do that after I had that long talk with him and told him how bad it would be.
>
> "You'll have a father!" Mom said. She looked really excited and happy.
>
> "I don't want one," I said.
>
> "But you like Theo."
>
> "So? Why does he have to be my father just because I like him?"
>
> Mom looked away. "Things won't be different, Scratcher, I promise."
>
> "You'll have babies."

"No, definitely not."
"But babies just happen."
"No, they don't. I promise not to have one unless we all decide it would be good."
I tried going back to sleep, but I couldn't for a long time. I thought how ironical it was. Evelyn would have been so happy to get a father--maybe her mother would like Theo! Here I had said I didn't want anything to change and everything was changing. Grandma and Grandpa were going to Arizona, I was going to be twelve, Mom was getting married, and I was going to have a father. If I had known being eleven would be like this, I certainly wouldn't have wished I could be eleven all my life. (pp. 149-150)

Any reader assuming that the wedding (or the marriage thereafter) would be conventional has obviously never read a Klein book. Indeed, the wedding and what led up to it and what probably followed would have pleased Brett in its lack of conventionality.

The morning of the wedding I brought Mom and Theo breakfast in bed. They both looked sort of scared and nervous, and I even had to butter their toast. To tell the truth, I even had to eat most of the breakfast, which I shared with Norma. (We had smuggled her in for one night.) (p. 154)

Reviews of Mom were most favorable, the reviewers noting the ability of Klein to get to the heart of young people and their concerns in a believable, if sometimes slick, style. One reviewer noted

The effect of the book would be totally different if the tone were strident and smart. But the writing is low-keyed, witty, and honest, accurately echoing the spontaneous expression of contemporary children; and the unorthodox characters are warmly human. (The Horn Book Magazine, February 1973, p. 57)

In an unpublished paper, Nadine Shimer questioned the perceptions Klein attributes to Brett at the same time arguing the book may represent quite different values and viewpoints to an adolescent and an adult reader.

The simplicity of Brett's perceptions of a situation may be sufficient to an immature audience, but it elicits a very different response from an adult, who is apt to be more intrigued by the story beyond the story that is told. In fact, at times one is tempted to say, 'Oh, come on!' No eleven-year-old girl is both that naive and that level-headed. No one, even at age eleven, could have been so insulated from conventional attitudes that she feels no embarrassment at her illegitimacy, no deprivation at the lack of a father, no interest in being attractive to the opposite sex, no sense of the proprieties of sex roles in the home and on the job, no desire for concealing her mother's extra-marital sex relations from her grandmother.

> In fact, this may not be the case; it may be very plausible for a girl reared in this unusual environment to think, feel, and behave just as Brett does. In any event, the adolescent would read quite a different book from the one an adult reads, and, I suspect, a much less interesting one.

The breadth of appeal of Mom and its sophistication and honesty is underlined in the comment by Marilyn R. Singer.

> . . . the author makes readers aware that their lives will be shaped by the values they have. And it's all done without preaching.
> (School Library Journal, December 1972, p. 61)

It's Not What You Expect revealed little diminution in Klein's power when it appeared in 1973. Told in the first person by fourteen-year-old Carla, the plot once again turns on a series of reversals. Carla and her twin brother Oliver are clever, and early in the book they set out to start their own restaurant, at least for one summer. If Carla has some qualms, Oliver has none. Not only does he read Gourmet Magazine, he is a gourmet cook, and the absence of the neighboring Stollingwell family during the summer convinces Oliver that their restaurant has a chance of success which it does, not with unbelievable speed but relatively soon. Carla's father has moved out of the household and is now living with a hippie girlfriend. Not only that, he's also grown a beard which Carla does not like. Ralph, Carla's older brother, and his girlfriend Sara Lee have a not particularly unusual problem for contemporary adolescent literature--she's pregnant. What makes a trite situation come alive is Oliver's willingness to step in and help in the most obvious way he feels he can help, by putting up the profits of the restaurant to pay for the abortion. The abortion is not presented in a matter-of-fact way, but Sara Lee emerges from it without noticeable physical or emotional scars. The more significant reversal comes from a surprising source. Carla has sworn herself to secrecy, but inadvertently she blurts out the news to her mother who reacts in a most surprising way, a most revealing way to Carla.

> "It's just . . . well, Sara Lee got pregnant and had an abortion, but she's OK and--" I mean, here I'd gone around telling everyone especially not to tell their parents and here I went and did it. I don't know what possessed me. I guess I really wanted Mom's reaction. I mean, I do feel in a way that Oliver and Ralph look at it differently from me, not being of the same sex. Usually I would not say that, but in this case I think it was true.
>
> "I'm glad she's okay," Mom said. "Poor thing, though." She sat down at the foot of the stairs. "You know, your generation is lucky, Car, really, they really are. Things are so much more open now. I remember when I had an abortion, the doctor was so nasty and cold. He made me feel so rotten, like I'd committed some heinous act. It was so humiliating! That was worse than the pain of it really."

> I must have been standing there ironing the same corner of the tablecloth back and forth about a dozen times. My heart was beating like a drum. It was odd. Partly I felt like running full speed out of the room, I was so nervous. On the other hand, I was really glad Mom was telling me all this. Mom has always sort of favored Oliver. I've almost never, never felt she would tell me anything she wouldn't have told him. She must think I'm fairly mature to tell me this. That made me feel extremely good, despite the nervousness.
>
> "You know, it's not easy to have an abortion, Car. I mean, even for me, believing in it, still I think there are always some mixed feelings . . . Maybe if my mother had talked to me about those things, but she just never did. You and I don't always talk, but I feel like we can. I mean I hope if something like this ever happens to you, you'd feel you could come to me. . . I felt so lonely when it happened."
> (Avon paperback, pp. 115-117)

And in that moment of confidence, Carla learns more about her mother and about life and loving and losing than she's ever learned before. Her mother talks to her as if Carla were grown up, telling her that all this happened befor she met Carla's father.

> "It wasn't Dad. It was a fellow named Leonard Weisberg. I hadn't even met Dad yet." She looked at me. "He was a student with me at City. You'd have liked him, Car. He was terribly brilliant, terribly--. Did I ever show this picture of him?"
>
> . . .
>
> "He died of Hodgkin's disease," she said. She was kind of fiddling with the picture, not looking at me. (p. 117)

Carla is a brilliant student, she plays the cello magnificently, and she does so many things so well, but the high standards she sets for herself and for others ultimately are challenged, and Carla realizes as she looks back over the summer that she has tended to pre-judge people, even herself, far too much. Frances, her father's girlfriend, turns out to be a teacher at Manhattan School of Music, not at all a hippie. Worse than that, Carla likes Frances. Carla's mother emerges as a real human being, not the person Carla thought she knew so well. Even Oliver turns out to have facets to his character that Carla could not have imagined. As Carla says near the end of the book, everything is changed. Maybe Carla will even grow up and recognize that people simply can't be pigeon-holed nor problems simplified.

> I just don't think I can think of Dad the same way after having read his novel or think of Mom the same way knowing about her love affairs and abortions and stuff, or about Ralph and Sara Lee the same now that they had this crisis. I don't think I think the worse of any of them, but they all seem different to me. (pp. 126-127)

It's Not had a less uniformly enthusiastic press than Mom. One reviewer was largely disappointed.

> Oliver, a gourmet cook, is as unbelieveable as other characters and happenings in the novel . . . The story does have flashes of Ms. Klein's astonishing insights and some very funny scenes but the novel as a whole is disappointing. (Publisher's Weekly, March 5, 1973, pp. 82-83.

But another reviewer liked it very much.

> As she did in Mom, the Wolf Man and Me, Norma Klein adds another dimension to the junior novel by having living, breathing adults as well as adolescents. . . The writing style is lively, the characters vividly drawn, the treatment balanced. (Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, July-August, 1973, p. 172)

After Mom and It's Not, Klein's later two novels have been most disappointing. Taking Sides has some intriguing threads and characters running through it, but overall it is episodic and the book never quite goes anywhere, mostly because it cannot make up its mind where it wants to go, or perhaps because it can go so many different ways, all equally attractive, all ultimately unfulfilling and unfulfilled, and all eventually ideas never really explored or developed. Ten-year-old Nell loves her father far more than her mother while five-year-old brother Hugo loves his mother. Her parents' divorce means the children will live with their father most of the year though they frequently spend vacations with their mother and her friend Greta. Nell begins to grow up and even her father matures just a bit, casting off his immature lover Arden, but essentially very little happens. The most provocative thread is the relationship between Greta and Nell's mother which may or may not be a lesbian. At the very least, if Taking Sides does not bring lesbianism to the adolescent novel, it borders on it, witness the following dialogue.

> "Is Greta the woman you're living with?"
> "Right."
> "You know, it amazes me," Grandma said, "to see a young person without a job. I think it's so wrong of parents to allow that!"
> "What young person do you mean?" Mom said.
> "This--Greta. I mean, from what Phyllis has said," she said to Mr. Lipkowitz, "she just stays home, lives in this house her parents have left her and--"
> "Writes novels--a really filthy thing to do," Mom said angrily.
> "You said she just does that in the evening."
> "What the hell difference is it to you when she does it?" Mom said.
> "I wouldn't have a person like that in my house," Grandma said in a loud voice, as though Mom were very far away. "They think they can get away with anything these days. It's a shame, it makes me sick."

> Mom was holding my arm and squeezing it so tight it hurt.
>
> "Well, I think everyone has their--" Mr. Lipkowitz began.
>
> "If they're in their teens and finding themselves or whatever, all right," Grandma said, "but thirty some years old and still just--"
>
> "You've never even met her!" Mom said. Her voice was shaking.
>
> "I don't have to . . . I'm sure she's a splendid girl," Grandma said sarcastically. "You wouldn't be living with her if she weren't would you?"
> (pp. 66-67)

If that dialogue seems relatively innocuous or indirect, other touches in the book hint at lesbianism, a hint that may have some validity in view of what Klein has said elsewhere.

> One novel I'm thinking of writing a sequel to is Taking Sides. In it the mother was living in the country with a woman friend. Several people asked me after the book was published if I'd intended them to have a lesbian relationship. Frankly, I don't think I had resolved the issue in my mind and since the children in the book were 12 and 5 it seemed to me possibly they wouldn't be aware of the issue themselves. The sequel I've thought of would take place several years later when Nell, the heroine, would be 17 and beginning to be aware of her own sexuality. At that point I think she and her mother could discuss this more frankly. I see the mother as someone who, though a lesbian at a certain point in her life, is somewhat tentative about it, especially in relationship to her children. The mother's feelings about revealing it would be a part of the story, not just the daughter's reaction.
> (Lou Willett Stanek, "Just Listening: Interviews with Six Adolescent Novelists," Arizona English Bulletin, April 1976, p. 28)

If the influential Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books (November 1974, p. 46) liked Taking Sides, another reviewer had some qualms, though they are not my qualms.

> The author has probed another unusual family situation with her customary frankness and stylistic flair that just avoids glibness. . . One wonders if in revealing the human frailties of parents, the author might be creating a breed of over-mature children.
> (The Booklist, July 15, 1974, p. 1254)

But of all four Klein novels written for young people, her latest has seemed to me the most disappointing, superficial, disjointed, and episodic. What It's All About is about eleven-year-old Bernie (short for Bernadette) and her problems with her divorced parents, her Jewish mother and her Japanese father, her increasingly (and justifiably) irritated step-father Gabe, her father's very pregnant soon-to-be bride Peggy, her overweight boyfriend Jonah, and a Vietnamese orphan Suzu being adopted by Bernie's mother. Bernie lives with her mother but on several occasions she's able to visit her father in San Francisco and in one funny scene the whole family, mother included, visits father and his new wife. Klein makes this her most with-it book by including by-now commonplace four-letter words in all the appropriate places with all the proper and shocked reactions by other characters. Bernie and Suzu are pleasing characters, the mother is puzzling, and the father is pretty much out of the picture both for Bernie and the reader. And the book ends up a colossal disappointment. I usually pay little attention to reviewers, often disagreeing and even when agreeing shrugging my shoulders, but I'll confess a certain pleasure in finding two reviewers of this novel with whom I agree.

> This catalogue of contemporary lifestyles, centered around ten-year-old Bern who is half-Jewish, half-Japanese, is peculiarly without passion or life.
> (Leila C. Shapiro in School Library Journal, November 1975, p. 79)

> A vegetable soup of problems, this serves up a situation not so uncommon as most people would like to believe, but Klein's casually sophisticated treatment may make it seem remote. . . As usual Klein's style is slick, the dialog easy-going, and the characters real enough to stick around in a reader's mind for a while.
> (The Booklist, November 1, 1975, p. 369)

If I were extremely fond of Mom, the Wolf Man and Me when it first appeared in 1972 and my enthusiasm for It's Not What You Expect when it appeared in 1973 remained almost as high, the appearance of the last two books Taking Sides and What It's All About have made me take another and far more critical look at Klein's work. Klein's wish to reverse roles or characters or situations in the first two books impressed me when I first read them and they impressed me again when I recently reread them. Mom's Brett and Deborah are appealing, their roles interesting, and Klein's views perceptive. It's Not seemed to me less perceptive, but the abortion incidents are well handled, and they permit and even lead to a depth of understanding between mother and daughter which is believable and even touching. Not so the last two books. If Mom seems organically the most tightly organized, the episodic tendencies of It's Not were not all that great a problem. But the episodic natures of the last two books, mixed with undeveloped characters and themes led to failure.

Were Norma Klein to forego any further writing for adolescents, I believe kids would continue to read Mom for some time to come, and I suspect adults would benefit from reading Mom and It's Not even longer. I question whether kids will read Taking Sides or What It's All About today, much less tomorrow. In her drive to reverse roles and ideas and situations, Norma Klein stopped creating believable plots and incidents and became more and more a trendy sort of writer, a writer who writes very with-it books, a writer whose last two books are eminently forgettable. After her first two books, but especially Mom, that is sad.

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Between Parents and Children: M.E. Kerr's Novels for Young Adults

by

June Berkley

In IF I LOVE YOU, AM I TRAPPED FOREVER, DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK, and THE SON OF SOMEONE FAMOUS, each of M.E. Kerr's teen-age protagonists suffers an identity crisis largely aggravated or initiated by his life in a disoriented family structure. In particular, the main character in each novel suffers in his attempts to establish satisfactory relationships with members of the opposite sex, a suffering largely generated by aberations in his family experience.

Alan Bennet, "the most popular, very handsome, very cool" sixteen-year-old in IF I LOVE YOU, lives with his deserted and divorced--but not entirely crippled--mother and a grandfather who is only mildly irritating with his pat answer-prescription laden conversations. Although his relationship with his mother appears to be under no particular tension, he comes early on to a confrontation with the "messed up" father he has never seen. Alan's visit to New York to see his alcoholic father and his newer wife is a fiasco which leaves the boy feeling his father has tried to buy his esteem. As he struggles to understand what male-female relationships can or should be, his life is further complicated by the appearance of "Doomed" Duncan Stein, an intellectual, a non-athlete, a creative producer of a new school paper that capitalizes on the high school girls' interest in the excitement of short-term romance.

Leah, Alan's rather wholesome girlfriend, is swept up in the romantic air of REMOTE, and even though she's exchanged "going steady" tokens with Alan, decides that she isn't going to be trapped forever. Alan suffers appropriately.

An additional glimpse into the mystery and corruption of male-female relationships is provided by Doomed's parents, especially by Catherine, his stepmother, who provides an older-woman attraction-fixation, and who figures in the sudden departure of Alan's high school football coach--himself the victim of alcoholism and the resultant loss of a wife. Certainly no adult models here.

At the end of the novel, Alan senses the sadness of romantic love--as the book presents it. Leah is still with Duncan, his father has faded out of the picture, the town knows the truth about Catherine Stein, but Duncan contains his tears and sobs when his mother--who has obviously made her peace with the harsh realities of shattered love--tells him the news so glibly. "That's the way the ball bounces" and "I don't want to hear about it." Alan dismisses the adolescent dream of security, requited love and sensible parents.

DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK is not only the story of Dinky, a compulsive eater--overweight and lonely because her mother is too busy with her rehabilitation of drug addicts to heed Dinky's adolescent suffering; it is also the story of Tucker Woolf, whose parents do have a supportive--if unconventional--relationship. Tucker is concerned about Dinky and her cousin Nathalia, product of a broken home, whose resultant emotional problems sometimes send her back to a special school.

Even P. John, the overweight intellectual that Tucker brings in for Dinky, is not able to keep Dinky on what he hopes will be a common weight-watchers' diet. P.J., too, suffers the affliction of a painfully off-beat parent. His father, with whom he lives alone, is so liberal that P. John has become an arch-conservative in defense. Each of these adolescents must establish an identity without more than the most casual sympathy from a parent. Only Dinky, who paints the title clause up and down the street in a desperate attempt to gain her parent's attention, gains a rather hard-to-believe sudden recognition of her special needs. As for Nathalia, she survives an equally hard-to-believe outburst of nastiness from Dinky's mother and only slowly progresses back out of a low psychic state--with Tucker's help.

Tucker himself emerges the most self-sufficient, perhaps because he is the only adolescent in the lot who has anything close to reasonable lines of communication with a parent. When the seven-month span of the novel ends, Tucker verbalizes his father's tag line for survival--forgive and continue. It's not much, but it's more than any other adolescent had to hang onto.

M.E. Kerr's most extreme example of disjointed family life and the concomitant pain of adolescents groping for appropriate sex roles is found in THE SON OF SOMEONE FAMOUS.

The teen-ager referred to in the title--Adam Blessing, newly arrived in Storm, Vermont--complicates the already bizarre life of fifteen-year-old, flat-chested Brenda Belle Blossom, a wise-cracking only child who lives with her thoroughly warped mother (a bad marriage and the death of Brenda's father) and an aunt who, though somewhat less perverted, is certainly no model of normalcy. Small wonder Brenda divides her time between trying to figure out a way to vanish forever or erase the hair on her upper lip. The story of Brenda Belle and Adam Blessing is complex, haunted by more unknowns than either of the other Kerr novels. These protagonists suffer severely because their lives are filled with so much uncertainty.

Why has Charlie, the grandfather with whom Adam lives, now that he's been kicked out of another good prep school, turned to alcohol? Adam's mother died mysteriously during his infancy. How? Why is Christine Cutler's father, Charlie's one-time veterinarian partner, so opposed to any association with Charlie or Adam? This is especially important when Christine, the prize catch of Storm High School, is forbidden to associate with Adam.

And there are the unending surprises arriving long-distance from Adam's father, that anonymous Washington celebrity-womanizer whose would-be wife and ex-wives--alcoholics all--populate some of Adam's best--and worst--dreams, penetrating as they do even his exile into remote Vermont. Adam's biggest problem is becoming himself--separate from his famous long-distance (in every sense of the word) father.

Against such odds Adam and Brenda Bell conspire--since they can't vanish and they lack the power to change or even deal rationally with the complicated adult world and the problems they've inherited. They decide to turn their attention to other miserable people, young and old. Their clever campaign to affirm the lives of other misbegotten souls is a poignant attempt to disappear from the traps of their present lives, to avoid entry into their own adult roles.

Finally, after a bizarre winter together, during which Brenda helps Adam pursue Christine in spite of her father's objections, Adam decides that, having weighed his father's long-time callowness-negligence-flamboyance against some of the shortcomings of ordinary fathers like Christine's, it might be unreasonable to expect everyone to fit a mold. "Not everyone is an ordinary average man." (p. 170) Applying to himself the same philosophy, perhaps, he dismisses his suit for everyone's dream girl and tells Christine "goodbye"; he decides he can join his father for the summer after all.

As for Brenda, she finds an outlet for the off-beat creativity that has plagued her mother so long. It's Milton Merrensky--Christine Cutler wouldn't be caught dead with him--who practices bird calls in Hogg's Swamp and captures the attention of Brenda Bell. When her mother remarks "My, my! I wouldn't be interested in him for a boyfriend," Brenda Belle replies, indicating her new selfhood, "He wouldn't be interested in you for a girl friend either."

M.E. Kerr confirms her interest in family relationships as a basis for her young adult novels in an interview with Terry Hughes in November 1975. In particular she cites the origin of DINKY HOCKER in a actual high school experience with a Black girl named "Tiny"--a girl, who like Dinky, craves maternal attention that is directed elsewhere.

In an interview with Paul Janeczko in ENGLISH JOURNAL, December 1975, Kerr discusses what she considers the ideal parent-child relationship: one of mutually demonstrative love.

> I don't think there are many such relationships. I think life is hard, when it comes to this. It is hard for parents to stay in love, stay alive (both necessary ingredients to the ideal relationship), and reflect loving energy to their children. (p. 76)

In each of the three stories cited, Kerr presents the frustrations of this dream; the popularity of her novels implies--to some degree--that many young people share her view of the world--"loving but skeptical, at times; optimistic but cynical; vulnerable but on guard." (p. 77)

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Adolescents Against Society: Institutional Values in The Chocolate War and The Magician

by

Maia Pank Mertz and Robert J. Mertz

No work of fiction is value-neutral. By its emphases and omissions, by its plot and characters and setting, literature constructs a symbolic world that provides clues and orientations to the culture which produced it and which, however inadvertently, it reflects positively or negatively. Sociologists of art, such as Leo Lowenthal, have long recognized the value-laden quality in literature. How these values are depicted has implications for studying and teaching adolescent fiction as indicators of the culture that produced them.

No culture, which has been defined in The Interpretation of Cultures by Clifford Geertz as "a set of control mechanisms--plans, recipes, rules, instructions. . .--for the governing of behavior," (New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 44) has a perfect correlation between the ideals it preaches and the realities practiced. Indeed, the wider the gulf between the espoused values and actual behaviors, the greater the sense of uneasiness or crisis among the culture's members; because these people recognize the disjunctiveness between the promises offered and the dreams unfulfilled. Often, as Erik Erikson has noted in Childhood and Society, this sense of disjunctiveness, or of feeling betrayed, occurs during adolescence, which is a crucial time for establishing an identity of one's own. It is often at this stage of life that the young adult becomes aware that teaching and preaching--the culture's wishes--have no relation to its practices. This disparity is familiar to everyone in the ironic statement: "Do as I say not as I do."

One of the common themes among adolescents is that the values they are supposed to follow do not correspond to social realities. Thus, at the very time that adolescents are attempting to find their way in the social world of peers and adults, they are confronted with disparities between the values espoused and the realities practiced. This disjunction is precisely the focus in The Chocolate War and The Magician, which consistently rate highly with students. These novels, consequently, provide excellent teaching opportunities to discuss not only institutions in America but also how students evaluate the choices presented to them via the symbolic social worlds in fiction.

Three major institutions in American life--school, religion, and law--are key concerns in these two novels. School and religion are central elements in Robert Cormier's The Chocolate War; law, or more precisely, the judicial system, is the focus of Sol Stein's The Magician. The two novels depict the corruption of these key institutions in American life through the protagonists' refusal to cooperate with the pervasive evil around them. In the case of Jerry Renault in The Chocolate War, he is destroyed; in the case of Ed Japhet in The Magician, the implication is that anyone can get away with murder if he is smart enough. Both novels demonstrate that power, even in its most debasing forms, is the sine qua non for success.

I

In The Chocolate War, a Catholic prep school named Trinity is ruled by two malignant forces--Brother Leon, and a gang called the Vigils. The "war" begins when a freshman, Jerry Renault, decides that he will not cooperate in what ostensibly is a minor matter, the selling of chocolate candy. His refusal becomes a moral test that challenges the rule of Leon and the Vigils' leader, Archie Costello.

Brother Leon embodies the corruption of both religion and school, for he is a priest as well as the Assistant Headmaster of Trinity. Leon's evil is suggested by Cormier's description of his behavior in class: "Smirking, sarcastic. His thin, high voice venomous. He could hold your attention like a cobra. Instead of fangs, he used his teacher's pointer, flicking out here, there, everywhere" (Robert Cormier, The Chocolate War, New York, Dell, 1974, p. 23). This snake imagery is particularly appropriate within the religious connotations of Trinity, a name which is ultimately ironic. For the novel

demonstrates that traditional Christian ideals have become hollow platitudes, travesties that reveal a modern wasteland.

Leon's corruption is apparent in his treatment of students. In one instance he threatens a student, David Caroni, with an "F" in order to obtain information concerning Jerry's refusal to sell chocolates. Leon's behavior leads Caroni to ponder:

> Were teachers like everyone else, then? Were teachers as corrupt as the villains you read about in books or saw in movies and television? He'd always worshipped his teachers, had thought of becoming a teacher himself someday if he could overcome his shyness (p. 85).

Leon undermines Caroni's faith in the world in general. As Caroni says, "he had allowed Brother Leon to blackmail him. If teachers did this kind of thing, what kind of a world could it be?" (p. 87). The traditional ideal of the teacher which society values--a mentor to the young, a transmitter of culture, an exemplary person--is clearly the antithesis of Leon. Because of his experiences with Leon, Caroni concludes "that life was rotten, that there were no heroes, really, and that you couldn't trust anybody, not even yourself" (p. 87). This dismal view of life is reinforced as the novel develops.

Leon is one of the primary causes of the problems encountered by the students at Trinity, for he expects all students to participate in selling chocolates to make money for the school. During this particular year the students have to sell even more than in the past because Leon, in an attempt to gain more power during the Headmaster's illness, had "overextended the school's finances" by "abusing his power of attorney" (p. 119). Without the money from the sale of chocolates, Leon's mismanagement will be discovered.

The students become pawns in Leon's machination. There is great pressure for all to sell [illegible]ocolates, particularly because Leon has asked the Vigils to help in the selling campaign. Although in the past the Vigils were an unacknowledged power in the school, Leon legitimizes them by asking their help with the chocolate sale. Clearly, Trinity is more than simply a prep school. It is a place where, as one senior recognizes, students are sold "a bill of goods," turned into "salesmen" and forced "to listen to all this religious crap" (p. 105). Its function as an educational institution is undermined by Leon who exploits the students to obtain power and to protect himself. The Vigils with their "assignments"--tasks which students must fulfill for fear of physical harm--make the school a place which many students dread. Cormier captures this view of Trinity when he states that the students waiting for school to start were "like prisoners resigned to execution" (p. 95). The school, in short, is a closed system ruled by a tough warden, Leon, and the bullying "trustees," the Vigils.

In such a system there is no place for the nonconformist. Yet that is what Jerry Renault decides to be. When the chocolate sale begins, Jerry is given an "assignment" from the Vigils: he should refuse to sell chocolates for the first ten school days; thereafter he could participate. Jerry follows the order, but then decides after the ten days have passed that he will defy the school's expectations and not sell chocolates. In theory, participation in the sale is voluntary.

Jerry, who has in his locker a poster which says, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" (from T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"), decides that he will disturb the universe. In so doing, Jerry experiences the emptiness described in Eliot's other famous work, The Wasteland. For the price of nonconformity, as Jerry discovers, is high. Jerry's decision to not sell chocolates evokes admiration from the other students, yet some wonder about his choice. "Brian shook his head--who'd want to buck the system? Hell, who'd want to buck Brother Leon? The kid must be some kind of madman" (p. 76).

Jerry himself feels the isolation imposed by his decision. As he says, it would be "So easy to be like the others, not to have to confront those terrible eyes (Leon's) every morning" (p. 98). Because of his action, he realizes that he is alone. "He was swept with sadness, a sadness deep and penetrating, leaving him desolate like someone washed up on a beach, a lone survivor in a world full of strangers" (p. 98). This description echoes the picture on his poster which "showed a wide expanse of beach, a sweep of sky with a lone star glittering far away. A man walked on the beach, a small solitary figure in all that immensity" (p. 97). The poster foreshadows Jerry's final desolation.

Jerry's individualistic stance results in a great deal of harassment, which culminates when one of the school's bullies, Emile Janza, calls Jerry a "queer" in an attempt to get him in a fight. As they battle, three or four of Emile's friends gang up on Jerry. After this incident, Archie decides to hold a raffle where Jerry and Emile would fight in the school stadium. Each raffle ticket would describe to either Jerry or Emile what kind of punch he could throw. Although he opposes violence, Jerry agrees to participate, hoping he will be left alone afterward. As the fight progresses, he realizes he has been duped by Archie:

> A new sickness invaded Jerry, the sickness of knowing what he had become, another animal, another beast, another violent person in a violent world, inflicting damage, not disturbing the universe but damaging it. He had allowed Archie to do this to him (p. 183).

The fight becomes increasingly brutal as Janza throws punches at Jerry, and the crowd screams "kill him, kill him" (184). Only when all the lights in the stadium are turned out by Brother Jacques does the violence stop, but not before Jerry "finally sank to the stage, bloody, opened mouth, sucking for air, eyes unfocused, flesh swollen. His body was poised for a moment like some wounded animal and then he collapsed like a hunk of meat cut loose from a butcher's hook" (184). The imagery suggests the dehumanization inherent in the world of Trinity.

This brutal encounter leads Jerry to discover that conformity is the only way to survive, for he has been beaten emotionally and physically. He wants to share this discovery with his friend Goober.

> He had to tell Goober to play ball, to play football, to run, to make the team, to sell the chocolates, to sell whatever they wanted you to sell, to do whatever they wanted you to do. . . . He tried to voice the words but there was something wrong with his mouth, his teeth, his face. But he went ahead anyway, telling Goober what he needed to know. They tell you to do your thing but they don't mean it. They don't want you to do your thing, not unless it happens

> to be their thing, too. It's a laugh, Goober, a fake. Don't disturb the universe, Goober, no matter what the posters say . . . . Just remember what I told you. It's important. Otherwise, they murder you (187).

The cynicism inherent in Jerry's discovery is a dominant theme throughout the book. The idealism of youth--the desire for change, for "bucking the system"--is not present in any of the young people except Jerry. Ultimately, he learns that no one can change the status quo.

Such cynicism is presented most vividly through Archie whose basic philosophy is expressed in his statement that "Life is shit" (p. 17). His primary goal is to manipulate others; like Leon, Archie craves power. When he and the Vigils manage to get the students to sell the chocolates, Archie observes: "but now he was on top again, all the chocolates sold, in charge once more, the entire school in the palm of his hand. All of which proves that the meek don't inherit the earth" (p. 170). Archie's ability to stay in power is premised on the assumption that "people are two things: greedy and cruel. . . we're all bastards" (p. 175). In the novel materialism and pain are commingled to depict, through Jerry's defeat, the sense of utter futility and bleakness. The teachings of Christ, in this world, have been totally inverted. Indeed, Christ Himself, in Archie's view, is simply a good example of "Public Relations"—a man whose ideas sell (p. 11).

For Archie, life is a big con game where power is the primary objective. For him, psychological power is more important than physical strength. Being able to manipulate others is the ultimate goal, and that power has to be absolute. Jerry Renault had to be taught a lesson because he defied Archie's power, thus becoming a victim because he was not a follower. In the novel, people are given three choices: they can, like Archie, take power; they can follow the rules set down by the powerful, as most students do; or they, like Jerry, can be destroyed. This view is made explicit by Emile Janza, "an animal (that) didn't play by the rules" (p. 40). Like Archie, Emile views most people as apathetic conformists:

> He found that the world was full of willing victims, especially kids his own age. He had discovered a truth early in life--in the fourth grade, in fact. Nobody wanted trouble, nobody wanted to make trouble, nobody wanted a showdown. The knowledge was a revelation. . . . Of course, you have to choose your victims carefully because there were exceptions. Those who protested found that it was easier to let Emile have his way. Who wanted to get hurt? (p. 41).

For both Archie and Emile the underlying assumption about other people is that you should "Get them before they get you" (p. 173).

By the end of the novel, the triumph of corruption is complete. After the fight between Jerry and Emile is over, "Archie smiled inside. But he masked his feelings. Leon was on his side. Beautiful. Leon and the Vigils and Archie. What a great year it was going to be" (p. 189). Trinity will now be ruled by the unholy trio: Leon, Archie, and the Vigils. Apparently their rule will be invincible.

As a microcosm, Trinity is a world without moral norms or values. The ideals of education and religion have disintegrated into battles for power. Assumptions about human nature are negative; the strong, psychologically or physically, dominate the weak, who usually are incapable of fighting back. The one boy who tries to resist his oppressors finds that it is safer not to challenge their rule.

II

The Magician, like The Chocolate War, describes a society permeated with brutality and corruption. Stein's tone is established when he juxtaposes quotes from Anthony Storr's Human Agression--". . . each one of us harbors within himself those same savage impulses which lead to murder, to torture and to war"--with a quote from Goethe: "There is no crime of which I do not deem myself capable" (Sol Stein, The Magician, New York, Dell, 1971, p. 7). The violence suggested by these epigraphs is reflected in the school. Like the Vigils in The Chocolate War, Stanislaus Urek and his tough friends try to intimidate the other students. One of their usual ploys is to demand money from students as a guarantee against having their lockers broken and robbed. Ed Japhet, like Jerry Renault, defies the gang and keeps replacing the locks that Urek's followers keep breaking. He finally gets an expensive Yale lock that the bullies are not able to break. As his friends point out, it would be cheaper to pay the extortion than to replace the locks; yet Ed refuses to give in.

One evening when Ed, an amateur magician, is performing at a school dance, Urek runs on stage and demands to know how one of Ed's favorite illusions, the guillotine trick, is performed. Ed refuses to tell him and challenges Urek to place his hand in the guillotine. Urek leaves the stage humiliated and angry. At the end of the dance, Urek and his gang, in full view of Ed's father and girlfriend, beat Ed so badly that he is unconscious. The bulk of the novel focuses on the way the judicial system functions to punish Urek for this act.

One of the central characters in the book is George Thomassy, the attorney Urek's father contacts when the Japhets file charges against Stanislaus. Thomassy is embittered because he was fired, some years ago, from a prominent law firm because he is Armenian. He was told that "you are being fired for excessive competence. You're obviously the most valuable associate we've got. We can't promote any of the other associates into partnerships unless we promote you first, and we're not about to have a Boston Irishman, A Jew, or an Armenian in the senior ranks" (pp. 91-2).

The discrimination Thomassy experienced at his law firm is also apparent in Judge Clifford, who will preside over Urek's case. When he first looks at Urek, he notes that the "face did not seem to be American, that is, cleancut, short-haired, near handsome, with a look of innocent honesty. On the contrary, he looked markedly Slavic" (pp. 87-8). He also notices that Urek has a scar on his cheek. "When he saw such scars on Negroes, he assumed them to be the result of knife fights, but in the case of this Slavic boy, perhaps it had been a spill from a bicycle" (p. 88). It is clear that in this case, justice is not blind. Stereotypical judgments of ethnic or racial groups is an unexpected response from a judge. This type of reaction from Clifford, coupled with Thomassy's firing from the law firm, are the first indications in the book that the legal system is corrupt.

After losing his job at the law firm, Thomassy spends some time on civil liberties cases. Then he turns to private criminal practice with one goal: "winning every time" (p. 92). It becomes apparent that Thomassy will stop at nothing to get Urek acquitted. Even when he knows that Urek attempted to kill Ed when he was in the hospital recuperating from the first attack, Thomassy protects his client by blackmailing the only witness who could identify Urek:

> On the witness stand Miss Ginsler (the witness) would have to tell the truth, that's all, about living here out of wedlock--of course there's nothing wrong about it, but you know how backward many people in this town are about that, and also with another couple in the house with a child that is not issue of a marriage between that couple, I think you begin to see the complications. The newspaper people are always looking around for juicy tidbits for their readers (p. 183).

Thomassy is not the only unscrupulous member of the legal profession in this novel. The prosecutor of the case, Marvin Cantor, the assistant district attorney, hopes to use the case for his own political advantage. He has determined that "The D.A.'s office was a natural steppingstone" for his political ambition which was "to become the first Jewish President of the United States" (p. 222). It becomes apparent that both Ed and Urek will be victims of Thomassy's and Cantor's ambitions.

The description of jury selection epitomizes the view both men have of the legal system: "no professional men, no intellectuals, no one with a graduate degree except in accounting or engineering, no one accustomed to abstract thought or moral subtleties. They each wanted the same thing, a human orchestra to play" (p. 223). Recalling the motifs of power in The Chocolate War, both men are most concerned with finding the easiest people to manipulate. Justice becomes secondary to the law game; as Thomassy says, "this is going to be fun" (p. 224).

Thomassy's unscrupulous behavior does not go unnoticed by Ed. He becomes so disgusted that he refuses to testify against Urek, stating that he does not want to "play the game" (p. 264). He feels as though the system will not achieve justice: "Well, one of these men is going to ask me questions in a way to prove that Urek did it, and the other one's going to ask in a way to prove he didn't or didn't mean it. I know he did it, and he meant it. I just don't want to go through this bit" (pp. 214-15). Because he refuses to testify, Urek is acquitted.

Even before the trial is over, however, Ed comes to the conclusion that the only way he can survive is to fight back. Against his father's wishes, Ed begins to take karate lessons. He argues that "You can't go to that school without knowing how to fight back" (p. 211). But Terence Japhet is convinced that the karate lessons are not a solution to the situation. "It was to him like the escalation of an arms race" (p. 211). Ed's decision to study karate foreshadows the violent conclusion of the book, for he had already been told by a hospital doctor that even when one fights in "self-defense," "Nobody wins" (p. 118). Within this situation, where even the winners become losers, Ed is trapped. Urek will not leave him alone.

After the trial is over, Urek hides in the back seat of the Japhet's car while it is parked at school. When the Japhets arrive home, Mr. Japhet gets out of the car and asks Ed to pick up some of his papers from the back seat. At that moment Urek "grabbed for Ed's throat" (p. 297). Ed tries to avoid the confrontation by "backing away," but Urek manages to get both hands around Ed's throat. Ed suddenly remembers his karate lessons and "chopped down hard on the bridge of Urek's bent nose" (p. 299). In his desperate attempt to save himself, he kills Urek.

The novel's point, especially when recalling Mr. Japhet's comparison of the arms race and the karate lessons, is that instruments of death will kill, even if the killing is not deliberate. Yet Stein creates a final irony once Terence Japhet realizes that Urek is dead: he "went inside to phone Thomassy" (p. 301). The man he and Ed found contemptible will now be called on to help them. Since the novel ends with Japhet about to call the lawyer, the trial's outcome for Ed is ambiguous. But with Thomassy's courtroom skills, the verdict appears self-evident.

Guilt and innocence in this novel are, above all, based on debating skills and courtroom tactics. Like the behaviors exhibited in The Chocolate War, the appearance rather than the substance is important. It is no wonder, then, that playing by the rules, is far more important than asserting one's beliefs or values. It is equally no wonder that, given the circumstances, Stein writes early in the book of America as "a country on the decline after only two centuries" (p. 10).

Although the primary focus of The Magician is on how the legal system demonstrates America's decline, the book also comments on the quality of the educational establishment. Whereas in The Chocolate War the major emphasis was on Leon's power and corruption, the teachers and administrators in The Magician are depicted as being ineffectual or uncaring. For example, Mr. Chadwick, the principal, admits that he is incapable of controlling his school. "Yes, I know about the locker-room business, and I don't know how to stop it. If I issued another edict, it would have the same effect as the first: nothing" (p. 31). He rationalizes his own inability to control the school by pointing out how the police "haven't been able to stop the Mafia's garbage-collection activities in the area, and that's much more serious because several gang members have actually been found dead in Westchester, and there's been no fatality at the school as yet. . ." (p. 32). He concludes that there is really nothing to be done: "I've got less than two years to go to retirement. That's my solution" (p. 32). Recognizing his impotence in the situation, he simply decides to wait it out. Because of his inability to take charge, the majority of the students continue to be victimized by a few juvenile extortionists.

The ineffectual principal is emblematic of the other faculty, including Ed's father who feels himself "a captive of his vocation" (p. 13). Similarly, the students feel trapped by the school, which is described as a "repressive body" (p. 187). The majority of the students recognize they are trapped between "the greasers," the hoodlums who do not care about school, and the adult "hypocrites" who refuse to recognize what is occurring (p. 191). This view is presented in a letter written to the local newspaper, but even here some students refuse to sign their names, fearing retaliation.

The letter embodies the sense of decline. Too few people are willing to express themselves; they follow the crowd. It is interesting that both novels demonstrate the consequences of trying to be above the crowd. Both Jerry

Renault and Ed Japhet belong in a category described by a psychiatrist in The Magician:

> "What I call category-one people go through life like solo athletes, at their own fast pace, toward their own goals, setting up their own obstacles to conquer. Independent people who are not in competition with others but their own capacities" (p. 125).

But these young men are confronted by category-three types, such as Archie Costello and Stanislaus Urek, who "burn with frustration at not being category-one people because they don't know what they want" (p. 127). In their rage, Archie and Urek can only try to intimidate or strike out at those who they feel are their superiors.

Both novels demonstrate that the institution--whether it be the school, the church, or the judicial system--is unbeatable. And both books recall the old axiom that "If you can't beat them, join them": this is Jerry's insight which he wants to express to Goober; this is Japhet's view when he calls on the conniving Thomassy to defend his son. The pragmatic view in both novels is that the fight is not worth the effort; even in success, there is ultimately failure. Hence there is, as Sartre put it, no exit. There is clearly no escape.

The recurrent issues in these novels--individuals against the school or the gang or the judicial system--suggest a clear tension between the ideals of self and the brutal realities of society. Because no literature is neutral, tending to support or criticize the status quo, adolescent novels provide excellent opportunities to confront the value orientations that are of major concern for young adults. Unlike the formulaic endings of so many adult best sellers, where justice triumphs in stereotypical terms, these novels confront social and ethical dilemmas which, because they are not easily reconciled, provide students excellent opportunities to confront the Janus-like nature of American culture where dreams and nightmares so closely, if uneasily, coexist.

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Judy Blume's FOREVER, and Other Novels: Are Teachers Ready for Them?

by

Terri Roberson

Adolescent literature is most assuredly causing educators in the field of Language Arts to take a good look at what their students are reading. The authors who contribute to this new trend comprise a large field that is increasing with great strides. One important author who has emerged and who deserves attention is Judy Blume. Ms. Blume is popular with adolescents today because of her ability to relate to them on their level. She uses both sensitivity and humor in dealing with the problems surrounding the teen years. She tries to illustrate to her readers that adolescence is a normal part of life. The

The questions, disappointments, hopes, expectations, fears and angry feelings one has for one's self and for other people during these years are just the many phases of growing up.

Growing up to Karen Newman, the main character in Blume's novel, It's Not the End of the World (Scarsdale, N.Y., Bradbury Press, 1972) is compounded by her parents' announcement that they are getting a divorce. Karen loves both of her parents deeply and cannot understand why they cannot discuss their problems in order to reach an agreement. Many adolescent readers of this novel can identify quite well with Karen and her problems, because many of them are faced with this problem in their own homes. The reader observes Karen turning from person to person for help, and grading each eventful day with a letter grade from F to A in her secret journal. The book is billed as "a novel about love and real life," and Judy Blume does an excellent job of illustrating that the discovery of love, and the joy and sorrow attached to it, is slowly revealed to Karen as she learns to accept her parents' feelings toward one another. The novel is indeed a strong example of "real" life.

Ms. Blume's novels also deal very straight-forwardly with adolescent problems. One novel that is an example of this is Are You There, God, It's Me, Margaret (Scarsdale, N.Y., Bradbury Press, 1970). The reader is introduced at the beginning to twelve year old Margaret who experiences the trauma of early teen problems. Margaret's problems, more specifically, are centered around a desire to be accepted by everyone. She turns to religion to find answers to satisfy her, only to Margaret religion is the most complex problem of all. The reader can examine her dilemma during many of Margaret's direct conversations with God. An example would be the following:

> "...You know God, my new friends all belong to the Y or the Jewish Community Center. Which way am I supposed to go? I don't know what you want me to do about that." (p. 33)

The reader is taken through the trials of Margaret's mental development in both accepting her problems and God, and finally dealing with each. This seems to be a marvelous technique used by Judy Blume, because she gives answers to adolescents. It's the answers that are so desperately needed.

Deenie (Scarsdale, N.Y., Bradbury Press, 1973) offers a very dramatic answer to a very dramatic problem. What does a pretty, intelligent, popular teen-age girl do when she discovers she is suffering from a disease which could cripple her permanently? Deenie is the main character in this popular Blume novel, and her teen-age problems are complicated by a serious medical problem. The disease is Scoliosis and it is a threat to Deenie's appearance. Deenie, like most teen-age girls, worries a lot about how she looks, and the emotional strain the disease places on her is almost unbearable. The solutions to her problems are few. In order to prevent being disformed she must wear an ugly back brace for a period of four years. The problem is not so uncommon, and many adolescents have been faced with this problem. Blume deals with the problem in a very realistic way. She shows the reader that Deenie must first accept her illness, decide how to deal with it, deal with it, and then educate others about her illness. Deenie's initial reaction to her illness is expressed by Blume in the following manner:

"I wanted them to stop acting like babies and start helping me. I expected Daddy to explain everything on the way home--all that stuff Dr. Griffith had been talking about--that I didn't understand." (p. 55)

Deenie didn't receive an explanation from her father, because both of her parents were unable to cope with Deenie's illness. They unintentionally forced her to deal with it alone. As the weeks and months pass, Deenie quietly accepts her disease. As the novel progresses, Deenie deals with her problem by talking with other Scoliosis patients to determine if anyone feels depressed much of the time as she does. As she meets people with similar feelings, her spirits lift and her attitude changes. She seems ready to tackle anything, including a career as an orthopedist. The book is moving and emotional. Blume brings across to her reader that nothing can take the place of self-determination.

Anyone today keeping up with the popular trend of literature for adolescents is certainly aware of the vast changes in presentable problems for the young mind. Not that the traumas and dilemmas of teenagers have changed greatly, if at all, but that indeed the treatment of the problems has definitely undergone a complete change, basically to meet the needs of today's changed adolescent.

One example of this obvious change in treatment is the latest Blume novel, Forever (Bradbury Press, Scarsdale, N.Y., 1975). Blume selects a basic, adolescent problem, male and female relationships, and illustrates, through a beautiful story, what many of today's adolescents experience. That experience being a relationship founded on sex, nurtured with sex and terminated from boredom with each other. With the fast-paced world soaring around today's young people, thrusting new sexual rules upon them by taking away the old rules, physical love is very often taken far too lightly. And, keeping one's life in perspective is often put aside to support the old chiche' "...live for the moment." The moment suddenly turns into a "forever" relationship, and the couple forgets that someday the relationship may come to an end. Then what? Forever guides the young reader gently to the answer that is needed. That answer being to accept your relationship for what it means to you as a "growing" experience, remember your relationship, and gain control of yourself to move ahead with your life.

This answer is found at the conclusion of a lovely story describing the relationship between two high school seniors, Michael and Katherine. Michael is portrayed as being more experienced in the area of sex, but Katherine, lacking experience, is eager to learn. Ms. Blume gives Michael the quality of compassion in his job as "teacher", giving Katherine a relaxed, tension-free atmosphere in which to comprehend. What has shocked so many educators is that no terms, no situations, and no feelings or thoughts have been left to the reader's imagination. All is exposed quite literally. As the relationship grows, Michael and Katherine become truly devoted to each other, proclaim their love to everyone, and plan their marriage eagerly. Neither one stops to realize that first love, regardless of how true it may be, is often times just a "stepping stone" to the real thing. Ms. Blume, therefore, has written Forever to show young people that they must be careful of those "forever" relationships in this very sexually liberated society.

Therefore, the question concerning Ms. Blume's novel is not whether today's adolescent is ready to read her book, but whether today's educator is ready to deal with it and to help adolescents after they have experienced the novel. Ms. Blume, unlike many adolescent authors and educators, throws aside the inhibitions that cause one to deal with sex in a "suitable" manner in order to deal with it in a practical and realistic one. One can simply say that Judy Blume "tells it like it is" in today's adolescent world, an attribute and characteristic that makes any adolescent novelist successful.

A look back to previous successful adolescent literature might help in determining why previous adolescent novels are not helping young readers because of the treatment of the subject matter. Maureen Daly, a truly outstanding junior novelist, also presents teen-age problems to young readers, but in a style that makes them the problems that "were." Daly's novel Seventeenth Summer (Dodd, Mead, 1942), a very successful one in its own time, deals with the same problem, male and female relationships, but deals with the problem in a "safe" way. For example, the main characters, Angie Morrow and Jack Duluth, are deeply in love. They know they must be because they enjoy doing the same things such as sailing, taking walks, studying beautiful art work, and drinking coke at the local drug store. This is a "fairy tale" treatment of today's dating problems. Teen-agers today, unlike Angie and Jack, are not concerned whether or not to kiss on the first date. Their questions are more complex now, but Seventeenth Summer and other novels written in the same style are lining many classroom bookshelves in our schools. The world of today's young person has changed, and many of our adolescents are searching for novels to give them confidence to meet these changes. However, yesterday's junior novel will probably fail them.

If changes are not being met, and not meeting these changes is creating a problem, then one can see the answer quite clearly--meet the changes. However, there is one way the world itself has not changed. The society that comprises this world is living a Forever, but only accepting a Seventeenth Summer. Educators and parents certainly see the need for Forever in many phases of education, but are they ready to deal with the novel? If educators and parents cannot deal with the novel and the concepts that come from that novel, then the adolescents are in trouble. Is it fair for a teen-ager to read Ms. Blume's book, and then be forced to think about the novel with no one willing to answer questions? An answer for this question might be that Forever is billed as Judy Blume's first book for adults, so one can breathe a sigh of relief and say the problem is solved. But, let us be realistic like Ms. Blume. Judy Blume is quite a popular author with adolescents, and when a reader enjoys a particular author, they seek the books that have been written by that author. The fact that the book has been billed for adults simply makes it more appealing to young people. So, the problem must be faced squarely. Seventeenth Summer and other similar novels are good stories, and should not be criticized because of that simple fact. But, do they fit the definition of adolescent literature for today? John Rouse defines adolescent literature in his article "In Defense of Trash" in the following manner:

> Adolescent literature consists of books in the modern idiom... to help them (adolescents) work through--emotionally and intellectually--the concerns they feel are important. (Media and Methods, September, 1966), p. 47).

According to this definition, we cannot ignore the pleas of today's young person. They know their problems, and we must be prepared to help them deal, not only with their problems, but with their answers.

Judy Blume's Forever presents a problem and delivers an answer in a "modern idiom" and, therefore, meets criteria for an adolescent novel. Let us not, as parents and educators, refuse to examine and study Forever for its good points and qualities simply because we reject the subject matter. Let us allow our teen-agers to erase us from their long list of problems and to work with us to eliminate their other ones.

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The Illegitimate Heroine and the Theme of Change in Two Adolescent Novels

by

Hugh Agee

On the cover of the paperback edition of Norma Klein's Mom, the Wolf Man and Me (Avon, 1974) is the banner "A Novel That Speaks to Today." This may also be said of Katie Letcher Lyle's I Will Go Barefoot All Summer for You (Dell, 1974), for both are novels about growing up. Unlike heroines in many adolescent novels, Brett in Wolf Man and Jessie in Barefoot are illegitimate; however, both discover that nothing is permanent. The sensitive treatment of the theme of change in these books commends them to young readers and merits discussion.

Aside from similarities in these novels, there are differences I should mention in advance. One is that Brett knows she is illegitimate, while Jessie is unaware of the fact until the end of Barefoot. That Brett can say unashamedly that her mother and father never married and that she and her mother live their lives unencumbered by social conventions makes Wolf Man unique in adolescent fiction. In Barefoot, especially in the behavior of Aunt Dorothy, we see the tensions and bitterness which may result where conventions prevail.

A second difference, which on the surface may seem an insignificant one, is in the ages of the two protagonists. Brett at eleven still views the world as a child; Jessie at thirteen is at the onset of puberty and with it an awareness of her sexuality. Thus Jessie's perception of her world is quite different developmentally and much more emotional than Brett's. The result is that in Wolf Man Brett's narration has a more objective tone than the often empassioned narration of Jessie.

For two years following the death of her Aunt Dorothy, Jessie Preston has lived with her cousins Rose and Charlie and their daughter Frances, who is Jessie's age. Jessie knows little of her father and mother, except that they are dead, and as we meet her she is only beginning to discover herself. The

catalyst is Toby Bright, the boy whose brief visit triggers her first feelings of love. Toby is not an attractive boy--even Jessie admits this, but he does bestow upon her kindness and her first kiss. Jessie the romantic feeds upon this experience: "I wanted the smell of honeysuckle to be a forever thing" (p. 36). She vows to go barefoot all summer for him to prove herself worthy of his love. "I walked on broken glass every day to make my vow hurt" (p. 84).

Jessie sees hers as the classical romance: "I dreamed he was Lancelot, and I was comforted to think Lancelot was as ugly as Toby Bright and yet so noble" (p. 83). It is through a dream that she makes her formal departure from the world of childhood: "One night I dreamed that all my toys had been thrown, one by one, in slow motion, into a dark well. . . .We didn't play anymore, and all the dolls were put away" (p. 66). Shortly after, Jessie experiences her first menstruation.

With two weeks of summer remaining, Jessie's vow is broken as Rose forces shoes on her: "The grail was broken, the crusade was lost!" (p. 99). As she sets out in darkness for Baltimore to find Toby Bright, Jessie pauses to consider her action.

> I reflected that in leaving so, I was changing my whole life, an awesome thing I had not fully considered. Whether I came back or not, everything was changed at this point. I knew it was still reversible, and I hesitated, considering a quiet return to my place in the Wilson's house, though it had never been my house. I had just a vague hope that somehow Toby Bright and I would live happily ever after. (p. 113)

With this vague hope, Jessie continues her journey through darkness toward the light of knowledge and understanding.

Missing her bus connection in Washington, D.C., Jessie meets Bob Brunelli, a young poet-taxi driver, who takes her to the Smithsonian (which Toby had described for her) and leads her to realize that one romance is not a forever experience. "For what had I gone barefoot all summer? I could never stop being Jessie" (p. 153). As she grapples with reality, she admits, "I longed to be over it all, to be grown up, beyond the confusion and pain" (p. 157). It is Bob who gives her needed perspective: "Education isn't all in books. . . and not a bit of growing up is. Dances, dates. . .you have all that ahead" (p. 162).

Learning from the radio that Jessie has run away, Bob drives her home where Rose and Charlie receive her warmly. Jessie tells Frances about the Smithsonian. "'You know Frances, the place Toby Bright told us about!'. . . It was the first time I had come out like that in public and said his name. The spell was broken" (p. 170). As Bob leaves, he reminds Jessie that "The best things of all aren't permanent" (p. 172). Having made her journey, Jessie returns to the familiar world of school and friends where, she observes, "I wasn't the tallest anymore" (p. 174).

With this new sense of self, of belonging, Jessie goes for the first time to visit her grandmother, from whom she learns that her father and mother were never married. "It took me an instant to understand as though it were about two people who had nothing to do with me. Did it matter? <u>For permanance is not the test</u>. <u>The best things aren't permanent</u>. Bob's book had said it. He had said it. Could I wish myself unborn?" (p. 182).

Brett Levin in Mom, the Wolf Man and Me thinks she is fortunate in not having a father, except when people ask questions. "Otherwise we have a good time, better in some ways than lots of my friends who have mothers and fathers" (p. 15). Brett's mother, a professional photographer, keeps odd hours, wears blue jeans, talks candidly with Brett about anything, and never gets dressed up or wears makeup. Brett thinks she has the best of all possible worlds.

Nevertheless, there is frequent talk of fathers and marriage, especially from Evelyn, Brett's friend whose mother is divorced and forever dating. "Whenever Evelyn and I play, she usually thinks of some game about fathers" (p. 19). Evelyn even imagines the Tin Man in The Wizard of Oz as her father. When Evelyn's mother attempts suicide, Evelyn is certain her mother took too many pills because the man she was dating did not marry her.

When Brett realizes that her grandfather, who is going to have an operation, might die, she admits there are times when she would like to have a father.

> Someone a little bit like Grandpa, a little bit like Wally, but different. The funny thing is that I can't imagine Mom with a husband. I don't know why that is. I mean, I can imagine me with a father but not her with a husband. I guess because for me to have a father, I wouldn't have to be any different. But for her to have a husband, I guess I imagine she would stop wearing blue jeans and having her hair in a pony tail and have to do more regular things. (p. 40)

Another advantage Brett enjoys is being able to do things with her mother, such as getting out of school to go on an assignment with her. "Children with fathers can never get out early from school, unless they really do have to go to the dentist" (p. 70).

It is on an assignment that Brett meets Theo, the "Wolf Man" whose Irish wolfhound reminds Brett of a wolf. Brett's world is threatened as an intimate relationship between her mother and Theo develops and marriage becomes a possibility. Though she explains to the Wolf Man that she thinks marriage would be bad for her mother--"If you're married, you have to live a certain way."--her larger concern is with what might happen to the relationship she enjoys with her mother. "She would be more like Andrew's mother, and probably wouldn't take me places" (p. 126).

When Brett learns that her grandparents may move to Arizona, she confesses to Andrew, her close friend, that she hates change. He assures her that things have to change, that children have to grow up. Brett's reaction is that "People always say that, but I don't think it would be so bad to be a child all your life" (p. 132). Nevertheless, Brett, too, must realize that nothing is permanent: "Here I had said I didn't want anything to change and everything was changing. Grandma and Grandpa were going to Arizona, I was going to be twelve, Mom was getting married, and I was going to have a father" (p. 150).

It is Andrew who, at the wedding reception, adds the final touch of humor when he assures Brett that she really has it made: "'I wish my parents had gotten married now instead of before I was born. I didn't get anything out of it.'" (p. 155).

The theme of change is summed up in lines from Bishop Reginald Heber's hymn, "By Cool Siloam's Shady Rill," which Katie Lyle quotes as a headnote to her book:

> By cool Siloam's shady rill
> The lily must decay;
> The rose that blooms beneath the hill
> Must shortly fade away.

Though the hymn alludes to the story of Jesus' visit to the temple when he was twelve and is intended to be sung on the first Sunday after Epiphany, this stanza speaks of Joycean epiphany which Brett and Jessie experience. While they are different in style, both novels are well written, with timely subjects and admirable heroines. Perhaps they will help in some small way to elevate in the minds of readers the innate worth of every individual, even those whose parents may never have married.

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Paul Zindel's Lost Children: The Near Misbegotten

by

Larry Moegling

Perhaps Paul Zindel got an idea for his play title The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man in-the-Moon Marigolds (Bantam, 1970) from Eugene O'Neill's A Moon for the Misbegotten. There are, however, many similarities in these two plays besides the word moon in the titles. Zindel opens Act I of Marigolds with these stage directions: "The lights go down slowly as music creeps in--a theme for lost children, the near misbegotten."

Here is the word misbegotten, an obvious parallel to O'Neill. Using misbegotten in its literal sense means that these children are illigitimate--possibly abnormally or illegally begotten. The figurative sense of the word, however, suggests that these children may not have been born if the parents had had the means to prevent their births. Zindel's word, misbegotten, may not have been the most applicable to use here. One could modify his word to miscarried. "The near miscarried" therefore denotes (barring the natal definition) the idea of children who have miscarried the conventional ideas of today's society. Zindel's lost children, then, are those characters who are lost in today's world; they do not and cannot cope well with what could be called the real world. The lost children resist parental pressure and direction, and in general all types of authority and rules. The lost children are in the so-called time tunnel of growing-up. They are in that period of time used to search for a sense of identity and values and the questioning of standards set up for them by society. These lost children become an alienated society in themselves, for the lost children rebel against the established relationships between parents and society.

The near misbegotten are seen in O'Neill's play in the characters Josie Hogan and Jim Tyrone, two individuals caught up in the world of sex and drink. Their relationship is the focus of the play: Josie is accused of being a cavorting, unmarried non-virgin and Tyrone examines his preoccupation with tarts and booze. These characters, however, are not adolescents, and that is why I describe them as O'Neill does, "the near misbegotten." Here is the contrast between O'Neill and Zindel: O'Neill writes of the "misbegotten" while Zindel of the "miscarried," the lost children, the teenagers, Paul Zindel's works, not O'Neill's, provide an insight into the problems and values of troubled teenagers. His teenagers have problems, the same problems encountered by today's teenagers. His works describe these problems and the environment that produces them.

The three adolescent "problems" of school, family, and sexuality are found in his works. Both My Darling, My Hamburger (Bantam, 1969) and The Pigman (Dell, 1968) center around Franklin High School. But what are the problems with school? Zindel's works do not necessarily deal with scholarship, although Tillie's science fair project is the focus of Marigolds. The teenagers say that the problems with school are the people or procedures in them. John and Lorraine in The Pigman speak of retarded English teachers, the hearing of r^2 for the twenty-third time, and the watch for the gestapo who would run in the bathrooms to catch boys and girls for smoking, cutting, etc. I Never Loved Your Mind concerns two high school dropouts who are so fed up with school they had to get away.

Today's troubled teenagers' problems concern the family also. In many cases the questions arise: what family? what home life? In My Darling, My Hamburger Liz has no home to speak of. Her stepfather and she cannot stand the sight of each other, and her mother seems to avoid prolonged conversations with her. In The Pigman John's parents bug him about being childish and are forever comparing him to Kenneth, his older successful brother, who didn't give them any problems that they can remember. In I Never Loved Your Mind (Bantam, 1970), Dewey, in contrast, stands up for his parents:

> And the drunker I got, the more furious I was about what she'd said about my middle-class Momsy and Popsy .... No matter what she thought, my parents did not cripple me emotionally, transfigure my id, or use my libido for a trampoline. My folks happen to be plain,nice, detached, insignificant people, and nobody has the right to pin any rap on them. (p. 33)

Yvette, on the other hand, did have a bad home life. She calls her parents bastards--her mother's the dumb one and her father is mean: "When I finally called them and told them I found them mentally disgusting, they left me alone" (p. 29). These characters, Dewey and Yvette, decided long ago not to stay in school or at home, so they moved away. Beatrice in Marigolds is an absolute tyrant in her treatment of Ruth and Tillie, her two daughters. Her treatment of the old nanny is also cruel--for the entire household, a living hell on earth.

The lost children of today have a hard time trying to communicate and survive in the real world. If the most integral part of society, the family, is falling apart, what can then be expected of the children? To live in Liz's home, for example, would be extremely difficult. To live in Tillie's home would be next to unbearable.

So if one cannot relate at home, one goes to friends, to someone with whom to open communication. The teenagers find it necessary to confide and to befriend. Zindel's characters often go in pairs: Liz and Maggie, Dennis and Sean, Yvette and Dewey, John and Lorraine, The Pigman with either John or Lorraine, Ruth and Tillie, Tillie and Mr. Goodman. The one person who refuses to communicate is Beatrice, and she is the one who loses the most control of what life is all about. Following a fight at home, the girls often do not cope as well or are not in as much control.

> Her voice was too energetic. Too quick. She must have had another fight at home.
>
> Sean had learned not to ask her about those troubles. Sometimes she'd talk about them of her own accord. Of course, they had arguments of their own now and then. They both had tempers. But they were beginning to know what to push and what to leave alone (p. 17).

The boys, though, are just as despondent, but they do not let their steam off as readily as the girls. When Sean speaks to his father about an abortion, there isn't any fight, just a parent who does not take his son's questions seriously. The denouement is given when Mr. Collins asks his son why "this boy" doesn't ask his own father these questions, and Sean retaliates with the familiar reply, "He can't talk to him" (p. 91).

A third problem dealing with today's lost children is teenage sexuality. In two of his works Zindel hardly discusses sex. Beatrice in Marigolds says that "Matilda has enough problems to worry about without sterility" (p. 43). John and Lorraine in The Pigman do a little kissing, but Lorraine's mother's approach to the subject is seen mostly through her coarse langugage and characterization.

> Finally we (Lorraine and her mother) went to bed, and just as I was feeling better because I had been relatively honest with her, just as I started to think she understood a little and recognized that she had given birth to a human being with a normal-sized brain, I heard this voice in my ear: "You're sure the old man didn't try anything with you?"
>
> "What?" I mumbled, not turning toward her.
>
> "Sexually," she whispered.
>
> "No, Mother."
>
> "Those old men have ways, Lorraine. Sometimes they touch you, and you may not even notice what they're doing."
>
> "Good night, Mother," I said, rearranging myself with finality, knowing that she could never really understand (p. 144).

Zindel's other works deal with sexuality more frankly. The first line of My Darling, My Hamburger points out the forthcoming action: "'It was MARIE KAZINSKI who asked how to stop a boy if he wants to go all the way,' Maggie whispered" (p. 1). The teenagers often imply that they could possibly know more than their own health teacher.

> Maggie shifted her books from one arm to the other. "Oh, something dumb. Miss Fanuzzi knows a lot about puberty and mitosis, but I think she needs a little more experience with men (p. 3).

In this book Zindel uses the terms aphrodisiac, birth control pills, knockers, testicles, wet dreams; but the focus of the book is a high school senior's pregnancy followed by an illegal abortion.

In I Never Loved Your Mind Zindel has Yvette doing the housecleaning in the nude to personify the society's new permissiveness and/or the flower children's values. Yvette and Dewey make love once, and Dewey misconceives this act as true love. Zindel asks what is the actual meaning of one night of sexual intercourse? Does this make a serious relationship or not? This book is told from the male point of view. Part of its humor lies in the boy-meets-girl vein, but differs since Dewey insists on keeping after the girl even after he gets what he most wanted all along. This shows that the boy may be more in control of a sexual encounter, but it is Yvette who tries to set Dewey straight to the fact that the giving of her body is not love.

Even though the female point of view is found in My Darling, My Hamburger, it is still a male who is in control of Liz's situation. Sean provides the money for the abortion, but he then decides not to marry Liz even after marriage plans have been made. The girls' views are found throughout the book, and it isn't until almost the middle that Dennis and Sean (as males) have a discussion about sex.

> "But now nature starts doing things. The hormones start rolling and those testicles start producing and all the rest--like breathing. You don't go around asking for it. It happens. It happened to me when I was twelve ...."
>
> "Did you ever have a wet dream?" Sean asked.
>
> "A couple."
>
> "They're funny, aren't they?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> Dennis picked up a pack of matches from the dashboard. He tore one of them out and began to pull apart the end.
>
> "She's afraid of getting pregnant," Sean said (pp. 37-39).

Even though Sean is making sense in this conversation with Dennis, it is really Dennis points out the reality of their conversation: "Do you think girls care about sex the way we do?" (p. 39).

After examining some of these characters' problems, it is necessary to study Zindel's technique in handling them. Upon observing the action in his works, it can be pointed out that these lost children are escaping from a mold that their parents and teachers fit so well. This mold consists of an emphasis on money, social status, and a sort of pre-marital sexual purity. His characters feel alienated from this society, and so Zindel develops various escape worlds. His characters create a world of their own and develop it to meet their needs and concerns. Some of these needs are sexual (Sean in My Darling, My Hamburger and Dewey in I Never Loved Your Mind); others are ones of friendship (Angelo Pignati in The Pigman). Still the basic reason these characters are able to maintain their stability is through this development of their own little worlds.

For example, Marigolds has two such worlds. Beatrice's (the mother's) world is what the stage directions call "a room of wood which was once a vegetable store" (p. xii). Her world is therefore physical. It is the place

in which she controls her daughters' lives, and away from it she has nothing and she is nothing. Beatrice's world is dark, for she sees life negatively. Her world literally has no windows and she berates all intruders. Tillie, her daughter, is a participant of this world, but Tillie also has a world of her own. Her world, however, has an exit. She leaves for school and sees a real world before returning back home to face Beatrice's.

Tillie's mind is her domain. No one can touch it. Yet she tries to explain what and how she feels to her mother often. She says that her world is evolving into changing states of mind. These changing states of mind are like her marigolds which bloom into various colors and sizes--representing the worlds in the household. The dying blooms represent Beatrice's world, a world which is slowly dying; the dwarf blooms are indicative of Ruth, the other daughter, whose world has been mutated through not developing for herself a place to exist. But the giant blooms represent Tillie's world, for her mind grows with the marigolds. Whereas Beatrice's world consists of nightmares and the needs to be hurt and to be powerful and successful, Tillie's is uplifted through student and teacher recognition--knowledge that her mind is not failing. She possesses a will to change herself. Her marigolds have the power to mentally remove her from her mother's world and thus be able to comprehend what life is really about.

John and Lorraine escape to the world of Angelo Pignati in The Pigman. Their ticket to this world begins with a telephone call and visit with Mr. Pignati, the Pigman. John and Lorraine seek out a world of fun and entertainment and money, and we see them propelled into escapades of human greed (just money to buy beer) at the beginning and of a captive sense of fun toward the end.

> John picked up his shoes and plopped them into the box the shoe skates came in. "I said I'm going to wear them."
>
> "But you're on the fifth floor."
>
> "She'll wear hers too."
>
> "John, are you crazy?" Just as the words came out of my mouth I could tell from the fallen expression on his face that if I didn't wear the roller skates, I'd be letting him down. I'd be disappointing him in the main thing he liked about me. I and now maybe even the Pigman--were the only ones he knew could understand that doing something like roller skating out of Beekman's was not absolutely crazy....
>
> All John was doing was opening his arms and in his own way saying: "Look at me, world! Look at my life and energy and how glad I am to be alive." We must have looked just like three monkeys. The Pigman, John and me--three funny little monkeys (pp. 87-88).

John and Lorraine's adventures from their parents' world to the Pigman's world leave everything and everyone behind. They avoid their friends; the zoo becomes the rendezcous point. This world is the blending of three lives--John, Lorraine, and Mr. Pignati--and it keeps developing even after Mr. Pignati's admittance to the hospital. Their world continues until something in the Pigman's world is gone. It is not the destruction of the china pigs, the house, or Conchetta's dresses. It is the change of an actual life--that of Bobo the baboon in the zoo.

> "Bobo died last week," the attendant said, still rolling up the hose....
>
> Mr. Pignati stood staring into the cage, and we stood motionless for what seemed like an eternity.... As I (Lorraine) started moving away and heading for the door John went to Mr. Pignati and just took his arm slightly, trying to turn him away from the empty cage. I saw the Pigman open his mouth, and then his hands started to shake... and before John or I knew what had happened, the Pigman dropped to the floor.
>
> Mr. Pignati was dead (pp. 151-152).

Bobo is the important link Mr. Pignati has connecting his world to the real world. When this link is no longer there, the two worlds of The Pigman cease to exist. John and Lorraine thus return to the real world.

A comparison of worlds found in I Never Loved Your Mind would focus on a real world and an unreal world. The real world would be the hospital, and the unreal world would be the living quarters of the flower children. Dewey's needs of friendship transcend the hospital to the commune; that is, from reality to non-reality. Dewey's sexual needs are satisfied in the unreal world, and this follows Yvette's explanation that their love is not real: "I kept myself in a luxurious somnolent state, trying to relive everything all over again" (p. 91). Dewey does feel and discover the pain, sickness, suffering, life and death in the hospital. Yet he listens to Yvette's explanations of the mental sickness outside its walls. The one and only place Dewey can really trust her is inside the hospital, even though he seeks an unreal love away from it. Dewey realizes later that she did not physically or mentally love him; his real world could never transcend her never-changing world.

In My Darling, My Hamburger the world of the car is where Sean and Liz escape their parents' mold. Liz is turned off by the social class climb her parents are making into the local country club. Sean is equally turned off by his father's habitual afternoon martini and social gab. Both sets of parents ostracize their offspring to a world where communication and friendship are possible. For a teenager, the best place to go is the car, the "wheels," where ideas are discussed, gossiped about, and then devoured. The car is the place for good times, for the double dates, for the disagreements, and eventually, for the betrayals. The car is the setting for Sean and Dennis's sex discussion (mentioned earlier). Although not stated definitely in the book, the car's backseat could be where Liz became pregnant. The car is then the wheels to Liz's appointment for the abortion. It is in the car where the hemorrhaging takes place which exposes the pregnancy and abortion, and, for Liz, the betrayal of friends. The world of the car is opposed to the world of the social climbers in that the teenagers are changing their lives from unreality to reality, while their social-climbing parents will forever be concerned with high class prestige and snobbism.

Paul Zindel deals well with the characters exemplifying the lost children of today. The lost children must escape to a more relaxed atmosphere in order to examine standards or values they find disagreeable in the real world. Then these characters may return to a world that's easier to deal with and more

sensible to listen to. Some of the problems "the near miscarried" deal with have been studied here. But some day there may be other problems. Luckily, if Zindel permits, these lost children will be ready to escape to their own little worlds to provide answers. These characters, the lost children, will then return and handle their problems, if Zindel continues his patterns of writing, in a most interesting, entertaining manner.

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# # # # #

The Cumulative Study of Literature for the Secondary School

by

L. Jane Stewart

> If students are to experience the full impact of literature, they have to encounter it as a cumulative study that adds up to more than a list of apparently unconnected poems and stories.

The above quotation from Glenna Sloan's The Child as Critic (Teachers College Press, 1975, p. xvi) suggests a literary study for the elementary school based upon the structural principles identified by Northrup Fry in THE ANATOMY OF LITERATURE; Fry, himself as senior editor of the Ginn Series, "The Uses of the Imagination," proposes and details a complete program for grades seven to twelve. They are both reacting to the fragmentation of the literary education of young people. Some educators have taken other tacks: James Moffett designs a coherent yet flexible program starting not with literature but with "the universe of discourse;" the University of Nebraska's Project English in the 60's proposed a curriculum that had structured motifs identified and organized in a spiral from mythic and anthropomorphic to realistic and analytic; Florida State's Project English contrasted three approaches: one focusing on the thematic (topical), one centering on composition, and a third, a cognitive design based on the work of Piaget. The English "open classroom" design is based, too, on Piaget but the structure is not on paper but in the heads of the teachers who are then free to listen and respond to individual students.

The secondary school's emphasis on elective programs, especially minicourses, increases the danger of fragmentation. The pigeonholing effect, the emphasis on choice, may address the motivation of students but it frequently ignores developing a sense of the whole of literature.

Suppose teachers as they deal with literary topics or themes whether in an elective program, within a traditional structure or in the most open of classrooms would deliberately begin to make connections and encourage students to draw upon their past reading experiences. Suppose the unit is "War: a tragic obsession." If junior or senior high students had read the picture books BANG, BANG YOU'RE DEAD by Louise Fitzhugh and Sandra Scoppettone or THE

TOMATO PATCH by William Wondriska, they could suggest connections; or these two books, which contain far more sophisticated concepts than secondary students would suspect possible in books for young readers, could be read aloud in order to start a discussion introducing the unit focusing on the causes of war; or they might read them during the course of the unit or at the conclusion of it. The stories are child-like but not childish, for the books contain universal truths fundamental to a unit on war and are written with art and skill. A confident teacher able to recognize the psychologically right moment for older students could effectively use them. On the same theme but for older young readers MY BROTHER SAM IS DEAD by James L. and Christopher Collier and FREDERICK by Hans Richter are emotionally powerful and beautifully written. The former focuses on the injustices of war and the latter traces the insidious beginnings of the persecution of the Jews in Germany just prior to World War II. The quality of each would make them available for the teacher to read aloud parts or the whole to reinforce or introduce a concept.

Two of John Tunis' books written for slightly older readers are SILENCE OVER DUNKERQUE and MY ENEMY, MY FRIEND, the latter probably the best known and most powerful junior novel based on World War II. Adult books which continue the exploration of the futility, injustice and tragedy of war are NIGHT by Elie Wiesel, ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT by Erich M. Remarque and Joseph Heller's CATCH-22. A senior, I contend, would grow in a sense of the wholeness of literature and in true sophistication as a reader if he could see that the seeds of war are in the attitudes portrayed in the elementary books and that the hopes of the future lie in the attitude expressed in HIS ENEMY, HIS FRIEND: that "Somehow, somewhere, we must break this evil chain and look at each other as human beings (Morrow, 1967, pp. 194-195)."

Perhaps an elementary picture book could also suggest a new way to organize senior high content in a mini-course or as part of a larger unit. Leo Leonni's THE GREEN TAILED MOUSE tells of a group of pleasant, peaceful field mice who make masks in order to celebrate their own Mardi Gras only to find that after putting on masks they begin to act in ways they had not thought possible and to reveal aspects of their personality they hadn't realized were there. The green-tailed mouse is able to step back from the brink of disaster and draw the others back too. Putting on masks, literal and figurative, is a thread that runs through much literature. In another elementary book, A TIGER CALLED THOMAS by Charlotte Zolotow, hiding behind a tiger costume on Halloween allows Thomas to overcome his fear of lack of acceptance and he is able to make friends. In BAD FALL, a junior novel by Charles Crawford, the masking is less explicit; Sean finds himself following his new friend Wat Sabbat into "pranks" which he knows are wrong; "just for fun" becomes a mask for gaining power over another human being. For older readers Stephen Crane's short story "The Monster" uses a terrible scar as a mask which allows a timid young man to turn into the town terror. The more adult the book the more abstract the masking. In Pierre Boulle's FACE OF A HERO, a man can't bear to tear off the mask of respectability even to save another human being's life. The most common use of masking as a theme is in war novels: the uniform or patriotism can act as a mask to allow people to behave in ways they would normally abhor. In ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT by Eric Remarque a young German soldier finds the uniform and appeals to patriotism aren't enough, and in M*A*S*H by Richard Hooker the medics use humor as a mask to protect themselves from the horrors theyface daily. The non-fiction book THE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY elaborates on this theme. What a reading project it would be for students to find and read other examples from the whole range of possibilities.

Insuring the development of a sense of the wholeness of literature through exploration of the connections in content from primary to adult books is limited only by the imagination and industry of the teacher. Some other possibilities are:

BEING DIFFERENT or "It's Not Easy Being Green"

Elementary	THE STORY OF FERDINAND - Munro Leaf FREDERICK - Leo Leonni CONRAD'S CASTLE - Ben Shecter YOU LOOK RIDICULOUS - Bernard Weber
Early Adolescence	THE SHADOW OF A BULL - Maia Wojciechowska THE FIDDLER OF HIGH LONESOME - Brinton Turkle
Older Adolescence	THE SON OF SOMEONE FAMOUS - M.E. Kerr DOVE - Robin Lee Graham
Adult	MY NAME IS ASHER LEV - Chiam Potok

THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY

Elementary	FREDERICK - Leo Leonni DOMINIC - William Steig
Early Adolescence	THE BAT POET - Randall Jarrell
Older Adolescence	RUN SOFTLY, GO FAST - Barbara Wersba
Adult	MY NAME IS ASHER LEV - Chiam Potok

THE ANGUISH OF ALIENATION

Elementary	LITTLE BLUE AND LITTLE YELLOW - Leo Leonni THEODORE AND THE TALKING MUSHROOMS - Leo Leonni
Early Adolescence	THE DREAM WATCHER - Barbara Wersba EDGE OF TWO WORLDS - J.C. Kocsis
Older Adolescence	THE LIGHT IN THE FOREST - Conrad Richter THE CHOCOLATE WAR - Robert Cormier BLESS THE BEASTS AND CHILDREN - Glendon Swarthout
Adult	WINESBURG, OHIO - Sherwood Anderson ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST - Ken Kesey THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER - Carson McCullers

AN ORWELLIAN WORLD

Elementary	THE WAY HOME - Joan Phipson
Early Adolescence	THE ENDLESS PAVEMENT - Jackson and Perlmutter A WRINKLE IN TIME - Madeline L'Engle

Older Adolescence	THE HOUSE OF STAIRS - William Sleater THE GURADIANS - John Christopher
Adult	ANIMAL FARM - George Orwell 1984 - George Orwell BRAVE NEW WORLD - Aldus Huxley

FINDING AND ACCEPTING ONESELF

Elementary	FISH IS FISH - Leo Leonni WALTER WAS A FROG - Dianne Massia ALEXANDER AND THE WINDUP MOUSE - Leo Leonni
Early Adolescence	THE HELEN KELLER STORY - Catherine Owens Peare JOHNNY TREMAIN - Esther Forbes SOUNDER - William Armstrong SHADOW OF A BULL - Maia Wojciechowska
Older Adolescence	THE BOY WHO COULD MAKE HIMSELF DISAPPEAR - Kin Platt A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE - Richard Peck
Adult	FATHERS - Herbert Gold THE HESSIAN - Howard Fast MY SWEET CHARLIE - David Westheimer

WHO AM I?

Elementary	PEZZETTINO - Leo Leonni
Early Adolescence	...AND NOW MIGUEL - Joseph Krumgold QUEENIE PEAVY - Robert Burch SHADOW OF A BULL - Maia Wojciechowska ARILLA SUNDOWN - Virginia Hamilton
Older Adolescence	THE PIGMAN - Paul Zindel THE CHOCOLATE WAR - Robert Cormier DINKY HOCKER SHOOTS SMACK - M.E. Kerr
Adult	THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE - Stephen Crane A SEPARATE PEACE - John Knowles A CATCHER IN THE RYE - J.D. Salinger

All of these examples have dealt with using the content of literature to develop a sense of the continuity of literature. Another approach using the spectrum from elementary to adult is based on the formal qualities of fiction. Northrup Fry suggests one way with his mythic patterns; Al Muller in a MEDIA AND METHODS article, "The Adolescent in the Classroom," suggests another. Muller identifies aspects of literary form which might prove to be obstacles to the inexperienced reader when attempting to read sophisticated adult fiction: flashbacks, interior monologues, point of view, symbolism, irony, literary allusions. He then proposes junior novels which contain these and other aspects of literary art. Starting with his bibliography the teacher could compile lists similar to the ones suggested in this article for content. Fewer of the complicated elements of literary art may be found in the elementary books; there are, however,

examples in books for early adolescents of flashbacks, sub-plots, different points of view and interior monologues. For older readers, even in high school, simple but beautifully written examples may be just what is needed.

Carolyn Gordon in HOW TO READ A NOVEL (Viking Press, 1964) maintains that there are "constants" which "you will find in all good fiction, from Sophocles and Aeschylus down to a well constructed nursery tale (p. 25)." She also insists that "if one is going to write or read fiction, it is of paramount importance to be able to recognize these 'constants' when one comes upon them, or if they are not present in a work of fiction to mark their absence (p. 25)," and she has organized for herself a "system of observation" to help her discover these "constants." She notes that Beatrix Potter's nursery tale, THE TALE JEMIMA PUDDLE-DUCK is very similar in structure to OEDIPUS REX. Both heroes are motivated by dissatisfaction with their condition. The use of an omniscient narrator in PUDDLE DUCK serves somewhat the same purpose as the chorus in OEDIPUS, Rebecca Puddleduck's use is similar to Creon's. There is dramatic irony in each; the denoument in both is prepared for a long time ahead; at the "crucial point, where complication turns into resolution, Miss Potter does what many a great writer has done before her: she shifts her viewpoint from the third-person narrator back to that of the omniscient narrator (p. 53)." Jemima's hubris isn't of the quality of Oedipus' but she is punished for it too.

The more one reads of literature with the whole of literature as context, the more the repeated patterns in content and structure become visible. What is suggested in this paper is that we help students develop with us and for themselves their own "system of observation" in order to experience the full impact of literature.

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# # # # #

Rites of Passage: Into the War Machine

by

June Berkley

Experience on the battlefield often mitigates the glory and glamour of war--especially for the very young soldier whose special sensibilities contradict socially and politically imposed norms. Many adolescent novels deal with youthful protagonists who come to understand how organized violence generates new, more difficult, more complex problems--dilemmas that demand a great deal of tenacity, forbearance and wisdom. These protagonists, in the course of their war-time experiences develop a special sense of themselves, a new awareness which, ironically, often reflects an affirmative view of self and civilization.

An engagement with several novels which deal both directly and indirectly with the war experience can provoke thoughtful consideration of the reader's values and moral convictions and even elevate his sense of human potential.

Because of its undisputed literary merit, its brevity, and the wealth of related audio-visual materials available, RED BADGE OF COURAGE is a good beginning or focal point for a study of "Rites of Passage: Into the War Machine." Other more contemporary works to be considered could include APRIL MORNING, by Howard Fast; ACROSS FIVE APRILS, by Irene Hunt; and JOHNNY TREMAIN, by Esther Forbes. Later, a consideration of novels that feature a more indirect but no less pronounced involvement with organized violence will be presented.

Most critics believe that Stephen Crane's RED BADGE OF COURAGE, with its theme of a young man coming of age under the stress of battle, a deliberate analogy with the coming of age of the nation in the throes of a vast civil war, is the novel of youthful initiation into manhood via confrontation with war. Further, most critics agree that the violence which provides the occasion for both processes is not questioned by Crane, who never raises the moral issues behind either conflict. Rather the focus is on Henry Fleming's confrontation with the vast implacable forces of nature or destiny (note the capitalization of Natural elements in the book). Still, the reader can examine what happens to Henry Fleming within the framework of the reader's own social experience and alongside other novels which delineate a so-called passage into manhood through a war experience in a particular social milieu.

Henry Fleming's view of himself as an "unknown quantity" who must explore, experiment, and "accumulate information about himself" in order to find his real identity will appeal to many adolescents who are experiencing or who will experience initiations into adulthood.

Youth's tendency to overdraw a situation, to romanticize, to live in hyperbole, is mirrored in Henry's reveries. In his hut the young man withdraws from the battle rumors to review the time before his enlistment, and recalls how he conjured "large" pictures of the war, "pictures extravagant in color" and "lurid with breathless detail." He is yet in his infancy and his view may well correspond to that to the young reader.

One of the deepest fears of the adolescent, that he will not be able to measure up to "others," plagues Fleming; "visions of a thousand-tongued fear that would babble at his back and cause him to flee, while others were going cooly about their country's business" haunts him before his first combat. It is not so much that he feels a compunction to duty; rather an internalized fear that he will not be able to perform as others expect him to perform. He fears that he will not be able to leave his gentler instincts behind. As is usual, he assumes those instincts to be false ones; he has been summoned to a more frenzied, daring, bloody world. Henry's two encounters with the enemy --his "supreme trial" of combat, which he passes the first time, and his second experience, in which he panics and flees, and finally his counterfeit "badge of courage" have been much discussed, and Henry is generally viewed by the critics as "a man" when he charges wildly and heroically into final battle.

Fleming's phyical action is usually overemphasized--particularly in the visual media-- and his last encounter with his native feelings before he "comes to terms" with the fact that he deserted the "tattered soldier, who had been so kind to him and who had loaned his last of strength for the tall soldier" is given small notice. It is only after he puts this "sin at a distance" that the young soldier's soul undergoes a transformation and dreams of "hot plowshares" are supplanted by visions of "an existence of soft and eternal peace."

Has he been able to mask and bury his instinctive compunctions to nurture rather than kill his fellow man? Is this maturity? "He had dwelt in a land of strange, squalling upheavals and had come forth." But the reader may ask, "Into what?"

If at the end of the book Henry has new assurance of his own worth, it is because he has been able to submit to the power of authority; his moral sense has been altered. He has become a man, for he has engaged in the frenzied ritual of battle--worshipped in the wooded chapel before a ghastly ant-infested icon-corpse, been redeemed by the death of Jim Conklin and in "an insane fever of haste" participated in a climactic initiation ritual--seizing the flag from a wounded enemy standard bearer. Newly washed in the blood, he reviews in his mind the performance of the day. He has put his old instincts behind. He has a new religion and, in the language of Genesis, "He saw that he was good."

An examination of this viewpoint can be undertaken through a study of some of the electronic and visual media produced by the many students of this novel. This visual experience is suggested as a follow-up of the RED BADGE reading so that the other books can be compared to the several views of Crane's novel.

Thomas S. Klise Box 3418 Peoria, Illinois	A filmstrip and sound track (cassette or record) comes closest to suggesting the above interpretation)
NBC-TV December 3, 1974 A special made-for-television movie Prints and script available from NBC	Events of the last battle. Monotony and hardships of the soldier's life not so evident. Color portrayal good for symbolism study.
Films, Inc. 1144 Wilmette Avenue Wilmette, Illinois 60091	What inspires Henry's recklessness? (or bravery?) Regional dialects reveal much about this particular war.
Movie stills and condensation of sound track from John Huston's MGM classic. Also from Films, Inc.	May be used at onset to stimulate reading or at end for discussion and review. Not a commercial success: faithful to Crane's own words.

ACROSS FIVE APRILS

Jethro Creighton in Irene Hunt's ACROSS FIVE APRILS shares with Henry Fleming in this limited way: his coming of age is influenced, though much more slowly and subtly, by the Great War.

His initiation into adulthood is not represented as an acceptance of war and its demands on human beings, but rather as an acceptance of his own ability to make a moral decision and as the shattering of his illusions that the end of the war will "make everything all right." (See chapter 12.) His world is not the indifferent natural cause-human effect existence of Henry Fleming. It is a more optimistic adult world into which Jethro moves--perhaps too optimistic.

The general view of the Creighton family as voiced by Matt is perhaps too good, too wise, too advanced to be believable: "But human nature, the all over picture of it, is better than it was a thousand--five hundred--even a hundred years ago. There is an awakenin' inside us of human decency and responsibility. If I didn't believe that, I wouldn't grieve fer the children I've buried. I wouldn't look for'ard to the manhood of this youngest one."

ACROSS FIVE APRILS does put man in charge of the war machine and in this charge, young Jethro Creighton works out his manhood, particularly as he wrestles with the decision of whether or not to turn his deserter cousin, Eb, over to the Federal Registrar--or whether he should protect him from arrest. (Or ask Eb to leave or foist the decision onto his sick father.) This example of the complexity of moral decision making and Jethro's ability to make a rational choice based on his family's optimistic ethic marks ACROSS FIVE APRILS as an intensely human and humanistic book.

One particularly optimistic--and affirmative--element young readers might be brought to observe is this: as the book opens, Jethro is self-centered and personal in his interests, while his mother is troubled by the impending war and its effect on her family; as the novel ends it is Jethro who is troubled by the larger world--by the national issue of reconciliation between the recently warring states. As a creature who is in charge of his own destiny--albeit altered by the war--Jethro Creighton will continue to wrestle with moral decisions in an imperfect but not indifferent universe.

Mrs. Creighton admonishes Jethro, on the second page of the novel, to give heed to his powers to "reason." This ability to reason, to choose his actions, and thereby to make a difference in his warring world stands in stark contrast to Henry Fleming's ritualistic movements and mystical capituation to authority in RED BADGE OF COURAGE. Jethro's life takes on meaning and maturity when he counters external authority and as Lincoln's letter says, "tries to seek out what is right." "What is right" here is not that which will make him at peace with and accepted by society, but that which will make him at peace only with himself. Jethro is mature because he has met this need within himself; Henry too is at peace with himself--but because he has been able to measure up to external, social expectations. He has entered the war machine. Jethro is beginning to understand it.

JOHNNY TREMAIN

Esther Forbes' JOHNNY TREMAIN holds this in common with RED BADGE OF COURAGE: both youthful protagonists begin as conceited, cocky adolescents who grow toward a maturity through their war experiences. While RED BADGE does not treat the moral issues of any particular war, or of war in general, JOHNNY TREMAIN's power hinges on the value in suffering for a particular cause--American independence and freedom--and on the young hero's coming to realize that "hundreds will die, but not the thing they died for."

While RED BADGE treats war as one facet of customary human behavior in an indifferent universe, JOHNNY TREMAIN individualizes the personal suffering of a particular time in American history and interprets the characters of historical figures who made specific sacrifices "only that a man can stand up." Issues, then, are paramount in JOHNNY TREMAIN.

This individuality, this standing up for a cause--but standing as an individual--can be contrasted sharply with Crane's presentation of maturity as risking "the great death" in order to stand within the circle of authority without consideration of some greater motive or purpose. War, then, in the two books is hardly the same phenomenon.

However, the young characters in achieving a sense of identity through courageous war-time acts, measure themselves against other, older models. Johnny measures himself against Rab, a more mature colonial youth who accepts Johnny for what he is and thereby confuses the boy, whose acceptance or rejection is generally based on the degree which he confirms to popular attitudes and opinions. Because Rab is associated with a cause beyond the war itself, his sacrificial death, unlike the death of Jim Conklin, has an ethical implication.

Inasmuch as Jim Conklin, young Henry Fleming's hero, dies after a bizarre mystical death dance, symbolizing union with the only reality Crane offers us--the reality of war itself--we perceive no cause, no larger purpose for his sacrifice. On the other hand, Johnny's commitment to some ideal that will live beyond the war is symbolized by his picking up Rab's musket after Dr. Warren tells him that his maimed hand can be cured.

This quest for some meaning beyond the fact of the war itself is also evident in ACROSS FIVE APRILS as Hunt tells us (p. 32) that young Jethro Creighton "...groped toward an understanding of something that was far beyond the excitement of guns and shouting men; but he could not find words to define what he felt, and that each left him in a turmoil of great frustration."

Whether adolescents in general can relate better to a youthful protagonist who espouses a war-time cause or to one who sees war as a proving ground for his own mettle is an important question. It goes to the heart of the debate about the nature of man and his capacity to live--and risk death--for some cause beyond himself.

Man's commitment to war on a rational or an instinctive basis can be further examined by giving attention to a comparison between Johnny Tremain's fascination with and growth toward understanding his friend Rab's ability to feel so passionately about issues and yet retain his self-control, and Jethro Creighton's struggle to understand his Calvinist mother's preoccupation with and pronouncements about people who talk "without a spark of reason to guide their words" (p. 12) and with his family's continued struggle to deal rationally with the "inflamed oratory and bunting" that both claim and proclaim emotions and mask the cold facts of the war itself: death, maiming, starvation and destructive upheaval. Both Johnny and Jethro know in the end that men who achieve some ultimate human victory in war participate in that war as both feeling and thinking creatures. Even Henry Fleming, who espouses no cause, come to know--and this relates to a growth common to all three protagonists--that what he initially thought to be the excitement and glory of war is an illusion, and that one must face the great death with his head as well as with his heart.

APRIL MORNING

The shattering of an early, naive, glorified view of war, the growth of physical and moral courage to face the battle itself, and a final feeling of selfhood--maturity--are also evident in the story of Adam Cooper in APRIL MORNING, by Howard Fast. Furthermore, although the references are more oblique, the political and ethical considerations of a particular war trouble young Cooper as they do Jethro Creighton and Johnny Tremain.

The "April Morning" to which the title refers is the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the first official military encounter of the American Revolution, and the entire novel takes place within two days. Like ACROSS FIVE APRILS, APRIL MORNING involves a family in the war effort; the introspections and actions of the various family members focus and refine the initiation experiences of the young man. Levi, Adam's brother, for example, dreams of killing Redcoats and of a sky whose color is red. He awakens Adam and tells him of the dream; the boys enter the battle when it comes--at first with enthusiasm that borders on recklessness. Then, although the militia men are slaughtering the British right and left-winning the battle--the horror and brutality begin to affect Adam; his romantic illusions are spent. His father is killed and he knows a new view of war.

Like Henry Fleming, Adam also felt himself a man when he was permitted to enter the war. (Adam also felt that gaining his father's permission to enlist was a demonstration of his father's love.) But his initiatory experience is more subtle, and it involves (as does the experience of Jethro and Johnny) not so much being able (or permitted) to do something as it does adopting a new viewpoint, accepting the responsibility for choosing a course of social action, even when he can not be sure that his choice has been the right one. It is not so easy to make a moral decision, yet moral decisions must be made--this is an awakening that ties Adam to both Jethro and Johnny. All must "take the responsibility of making a fearful decision." (ACROSS p. 145) Adam's choice is between staying home to help his mother or returning to the war. As in the parallel stories, the resolution of that question is of less consequence than the fact that the young protagonist has consciously accepted the responsibility to make a moral decision in a larger social world, in a context that involves other human beings equally caught up in the demands of personal needs. (Adam, for example, has his love for Ruth Simmons to consider.) These are dilemmas Crane did not choose to examine in RED BADGE OF COURAGE; they are, nonetheless, crucial issues in the social world.

Where, then, are the points of contact between Crane's young soldier and Adam Cooper? Consider his overwhelming enthusiasm for battle, ultimately shattered by participation in the war; his revulsion for the effects of war once his romantic illusions are shattered ("The Midday"); his shock and suffering because of the loss of a loved one, and the finality of his resolution, at the conclusion of the novel, to say "...farewell to childhood, a world, a secure and sun-warmed existence and past that was over and done with and gone away for all time."

Furthermore, this novel affords an opportunity--perhaps more so than either JOHNNY TREMAIN or ACROSS FIVE APRILS-- to raise some questions about youth and war in general. An examination of Adam's feeling of helplessness as he wearies of the battle: "We were in the grip of a force outside ourselves" can be likened to Henry Fleming's compulsive behavior in the final chapter of Crane's novel. Further consideration is due the minister's "Think about it, Adam...think about it...Youth is too easily shamed into action. Pride is strong and potent."

Part II Rites of Passage: Into the War Machine
Three Novels of Initiation: Protagonist Reaction to the Effects of War

The young men in JOHNNY TREMAIN, RED BADGE OF COURAGE, ACROSS FIVE APRILS, and APRIL MORNING achieve their rites of passage through some direct involvement in the war machine; three other more contemporary literary characters achieve their individual identities as a result of a more oblique participation in war; all are victims of the machine which declares with unwavering mindlessness who--on the basis of race or natural birth--should be enemy, who should be friend.

Jeanne Wakatsuki, a Japanese American who, with her family is detained at a California interment camp during World War II, tells her story in FAREWELL TO MANZANAR; Anne Frank, in one of the most poignant adolescent diaries ever written, chronicles her suffering and growth during the long months her family hid from the Nazis in an abandoned warehouse in Amsterdam, Holland; John Tunis' HIS ENEMY, HIS FRIEND presents from a broader time span and perspective another dilemma of preordained enemies, tracing the story of a young German Baron, Hans von Kleinschrodt, who is forced as commanding officer to witness the execution of six French friends in a small Norman village in 1944, and who later is defended from a French mob in that same village--by the son of the village schoolteacher whose retribution execution he had witnessed twenty years ago. Although this idealistic action does not prevent Hans' death, HIS ENEMY, HIS FRIEND affords, as do ANNE and FAREWELL, a hopeful view of man's ability to break the cycle of mindless hate that feeds the war machine. For this reason, all three novels, set during World War II, are worthy of some extended consideration by young readers.

HIS ENEMY, HIS FRIEND

Although a critical examination of loyalty to one's country and obedience to the ideals and goals of that society is at the center of Tunis' novel, a concomitant problem with which the young protagonist wrestles is the designation and declaration of "the enemy" when that individual or that group bears, instead of malice--or even disdain--a genuine affection for "the other side." Hans von Kleinschrodt, because of his long-time post as sergeant in the German occupied French village of Noget-Plage, faces a belated confrontation with himself when he is ordered to execute six of his French friends. Although no adolescent, Hans "put his head down on his desk and wept. He wept for the affection that had gone, the friendships that had failed, the trust that was no more. He cried for the six hostages, but most of all he cried for himself." He cries because he has inner resources of idealism unlike those around him. Only a certain gift of tenacity will permit the survival of his affirmative view of mankind.

The youngest character in this novel (which is dedicated to "those young Americans whose conscience led them to prison in these years), John-Paul Varin, son of the executed schoolmaster, gives voice to the optimistic theme of this novel when he speaks for his former enemy, Hans, some twenty years after the executions: (referring to his father) "...he would have told us we cannot continue to cherish grudges. If we keep feeding on these hatreds handed down to us by our ancestors, our grandfathers and our great grandfathers, where are we? Friends, what good are wars? Who ever won a war?" The reader can identify some of the spiritual resources of Jean-Paul, who is seen hero worshipping Hans as the novel opens.

An equally compelling pronouncement of optimism--one worthy of consideration by readers of all ages--is Jean-Paul's final plea: "There were six hostages in that cellar twenty years ago. Now, in the same cellar, we have six Germans. Shall we do to them what they did to us? If so, how are we different from those who murdered my father? If we kill them, we are guilty of the same crime. Somehow somewhere we must break this evil chain and look on each other as human beings."

All except Crazy Pierre and the wido Le Gallec are silenced and chastened by these words, and although Hans is shot by Pierre, the reader sensesvictory in a final vignette when Jean-Paul and Hans stood, arms about each other's shoulders and "It was difficult to tell who was supporting whom."

This novel offers a special attraction for the classroom because much of the action and the related examination of values is paralleled by the young men's devotion to football. "For a second Jean-Paul (in the final scene) realized this sickness was the same malady which had swept the French stands in Rouen that afternoon." It becomes apparent that the battlefield is as effective as the playing field in enabling men to stop seeing others as individuals, to see them only as a group known as the enemy.

These awarenesses and awakenings, shared by young Jean-Paul and his older counterpart, Hans von Kleinschrodt, offer some compelling opportunities for students to identify with fictional characters and events which affirm human dignity.

FAREWELL TO MANZANAR

Wartime with its sharp dileneation of "sides" intensifies the human inclination to belong. The need to be accepted by one's peers and contemporaries and the agony caused by exclusion occasioned Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's recounting of her experience in a forced detention camp for Japanese Americans during World War II.

Although most of the book is devoted to Jeanne's pre-teen years during internment of the Watkatsuki family, the most important rites of passage occur after the internment is over and Jeanne returns to the "normal" world of a regular California sixth grade classroom.

An important self-awareness is forced into focus the first day Jeanne goes to her new school and the guileless remark of a classmate makes her seriously question for the first time why her family had been confined at Manzinar. For Jeanne, on the threshold of adolescence, the girl's remark, "Gee, I didn't know you could speak English," came as an illumination of her obvious physical difference." It was "instant" knowledge that brought with it the first buds of true shame," Jeanne recalls.

Now fully aware of her slant-eyed face, Jeanne experiences the trauma that must be all too comron to non-Caucasians living in America: the feeling of invisibility (so sharply drawn by Ralph Ellison). Jeanne desired to be invisible--to avoid attention lest those who looked see <u>only</u> an Oriental face.

At the same time, Jeanne experienced a contrasting urge: to be accepted. This unhealthy compulsion--and it was unhealthy, for not only did Jeanne extend herself scholastically and by seeking and holding office, she strove mercilessly and sometimes unsuccessfully to be accepted socially outside school--did not come to an easy end. Jeanne felt deeply that she must be guilty of something to deserve the kind of treatment she had received at Manzanar. In order to please her accusers she tried too hard to become acceptable. This overwhelming desire to be like others she shared with Henry Fleming.

Another facet of her personality--indeed it had become her personality--in the post-Manzanar years is one she held in common with Anne Frank: she and the other victims of Manzanar shared a kind of acquiescence, a submerged belief that such treatment was if not deserved at least allowable. As Jeanne said, "It's an attitude easy for non-whites to acquire in America. I had inherited it. Manzanar confirmed it."

The final chapter of the book jumps from Jeanne at seventeen to Jeanne the adult college graduate, wife of a Caucasian. The incident that triggered a most significant rite of passage was Jeanne's meeting with a Caucasian photographer who had worked at Manzanar and whose existence disinterred all Jeanne's long-buried memories of Manzanar. This meeting confirmed the existence of Manzanar and impelled Jeanne to return there almost thirty years to the day after her initial entrance. Here she comes to terms with the singular influence of her life and recognizes that she can consciously view what was done to her and live her life as she chooses--not in reaction to the misguided values of others. Like Jethro, Johnny, Hans, Adam, and Anne Frank, Jeanne realizes that the choices and decisions she makes can be her own--as Fromme has said, she knows that most important of all lessons, she knows that <u>she</u> is in charge.

ANNE FRANK: THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL

Of the many and varied awakenings experienced by the young, introspective Anne Frank, (who realizes that she has spent her "most meditative years" in the Secret Annex) none is more memorable--and for this particular study, more relevant--than her final analysis and acceptance of a credo: one's own ability to act--and his faith that he will eventually be able to act--permits optimism about the human race, even in the face of evidence of a predominant evil. Over the months Anne wrestled with enormous problems, confined and compressed both physically and emotionally within the thin walls of the old Dutch warehouse, and all these problems led to a confrontation with reality that few adults ever seek or reach: on a Saturday in July just two weeks before her discovery by the Gestapo, Anne who has been counting heavily on the radio-promised Allied liberation, confronts the question of questions: Why after all the evil and hardship to which she and her family have been subjected, can she still hold on to her ideals? She concludes that she hopes because only that route will sustain life--not only biological life but the life of the spirit. As Elie Wiesel has shown in his penetrating account of degredation, imprisonment and death in the Nazi concentration camps, the ultimate crime against youth and mankind--is not hanging or starvation or the firing squad: the ultimate crime is the destruction, the obliteration of one's ability to believe in some ultimate good, some ultimate order beyond one's self.

It is remarkable that Anne Frank through her inner resources and introspection was not only able to construct so positive a life view but also to express it so hauntingly: "It's really a wonder I haven't dropped all my

ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death. I hear the ever approaching thunder, which will destroy us too, I can feel the suffering of millions and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty too will end, and that peace and tranquillity will return again. In the meantime I must uphold my ideals, for perhaps the time will come I shall be able to carry them out."

Just as Jean-Paul was able to break the chain of hatred by choosing to see Hans as an individual, so Anne (perhaps in part because of the many acts of daring kindness extended to residents of the "Secret Annexe") is able to see beyond the group, the machine, that is her oppressor--to the individual possibilities of man. Just as Hans, in his initial confrontation with those someone else had labeled "enemy," couldn't deposit his conscience with his superiors, so Anne, because of special inner resources, cannot succumb to the hatred of a declared enemy. Thus the fifteen-year-old school girl is able to give voice to convictions that have, ironically, been read, respected, and hopefully perpetrated far beyond the threats and pronouncements of her would-be enemy, the master of the Third Reich.

This is a hopeful and powerful note on which one could conclude the immediate study of youth at war; however, if students have been led to an imaginative entry into these works, the impact and influence of the reading will have done much to confirm Aristotle's opinion that the characters of citizens will in the final analysis "turn the scale and draw everything after them."

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Zane Grey's Wetzel

by

John Hollow

From deep in the forest came a moan, soft, ending "in a wail like that of a lost soul."

"Le Vent de la Mort," one watching Indian whispered to the other, and both fled into the night.

Their captive, Joseph Downs, a young man lately arrived on the Ohio frontier, saw that "the ferns were parted to disclose a white, gleaming face, with eyes that seemingly glittered. Brawny shoulders were upraised, and then a tall, powerful man stood revealed. Lightly he stepped over the leaves into the little glade. He bent over the sleeping Indians. Once, twice, three times a long blade swung high. One brave shuddered, another gave a sobbing gasp, and the third moved two fingers--thus they passed from life to death.

"'Wetzel!'" cried Joe.

"'I reckon so,' said the deliverer."

In the same way that this romantic and homespun savior, the Indian-killer Lewis Wetzel, slips into the forest glade, so he slips into Zane Grey's first three novels, Betty Zane (1903), The Spirit of the Border (1906), and The Last Trail (1909). The first, for example, does climax with Betty Zane's famous fort-saving dash with the gunpowder, but it is almost carried away by the love affair she does not have with Lewis Wetzel. "'I am so wretched--so miserable. To think I have been so--so blind, and I have teased you--and--it might have been--only now it's too late,' said Betty, between sobs.

"'Yes, I know, and it's better so. This man you love rings true. He has learnin' and edication. I have nothin' but muscle and a quick eye. . . .'

"'Kiss me goodbye,' whispered Betty.

"The hunter bent his head and kissed her on the brow."

This chance for happiness lost, the lonely figure of Wetzel permeates both of the other books. There are other characters, lovers even, but Wetzel broods over all, his face pale white, his eyes like knife points, and his raven-dark hair worn long as a challenge to the Indian scalping knife. He is heard of in early chapters, seen at a distance, but when the other characters have fallen into the hands of the Indians, as they always do, he slips into the center of the book, killing with such dreadful efficiencey that the Indians can only shudder, sob, and die. Wetzel's reputation travels before him like a moan in the trees, and he passes over the Indians like the wind of death.

II

According to the Dictionary of American Biography, Lewis Wetzel (1764-1808?) was one of four brothers, all of whom became prominent Indian fighters. That there were four of them no doubt explains some of the legends about Wetzel, especially the claim that he killed more than a hundred Indians. Like Cole Younger, the shade of Lewis Wetzel inherited more than one mantle. He became a legend long before Zane Grey made him into the one the Indians call Deathwind.

Nor was Grey the first to use this figure turned legend in a historical novel. Emerson Bennett, in The Forest Rose (1850), has Lewis Wetzel help a young lover rescue his beloved from the Indians. But Bennett's Wetzel is only a simple-minded racist: he kills Indians because they are "the red imps of Satan" and he is "a white gintleman." He even calls his rifle "Kill-nigger."

Bennett does seem to intend a certain irony in that his Wetzel lives like an Indian, is even occasionally mistaken for one because he is more sunburned than white. And James Kirke Paulding certainly intends irony in his brilliant piece of bleak humor, The Dutchman's Fireside (1831). His Indian-killer, who is named Timothy Weasel, repeats again and again that "It is plaguy hard" that he "mayn't take a pop" at each of the "tarnal kritters" he meets.

It is equally certain that Zane Grey intends no irony when he turns this insane killer, this terrible almost-clown, into the brooding solitary of the border. "The border needed Wetzel," he argues in the preface to The Spirit of the Border; "the settlers would have needed many more years in which to make permanent homes had it not been for him." The only irony in this claim is that Grey himself seems unaware that it is a rationalization, that what he does with Wetzel proceeds from much deeper motives. His Wetzel is nothing less than the personification of inevitable violence; he is the necessary Cain.

In the same preface, Grey says he means to "soften a little the ruthless name history awards him /Wetzel/." What he does in fact is to make Wetzel a Byronic hero, a man forced to live outside society, doomed to deny even Christianity. What is un-Byronic about Grey's Wetzel is that his rebellion is seen as ultimately good for both society and Christianity, and that is the sense in which the settlers need Wetzel: through violence he creates a world in which their non-violence can exist.

III

One of the ways Grey "softens" the reputation of Wetzel is to intensify his motivation. According to the Dictionary of American Biography, Lewis Wetzel was captured by Indians when he was in his early teens, and escaped only with great difficulty. The experience is said to have made him into the great Indian-hater he became. In Betty Zane, however, we are told: "When Lewis was about twenty years old, and his brothers John and Martin little older, they left their /West/ Virginia home for a protracted hunt. On their return they found the smoking ruins of the home, the mangled remains of father and mother, the naked and violated bodies of their sisters, and the scalped and bleeding corpse of a baby brother." To which list of horrors, each more terrible than the last, it is, of course, almost impossible to turn another cheek.

But the thing to notice is that this scene is not repeated in The Spirit of the Border or The Last Trail, even though those novels were published separately and without any sense of a trilogy. The books stand by themselves, even though there are a few cross references, and if anything ought to be repeated, it is this scene by which, if by anything, Wetzel is explained and justified. But there are no flashbacks, no visions of violated sisters; there is just Wetzel the killer.

In fact, a more important way Grey "softens" the image of Wetzel is to denigrate the Indian. While Grey routinely calls the savage red man noble, the Indian is noble as a deer, a bear, a buffalo. Indians, we are told in Betty Zane, "were a part of the wood; men whose music was the sighing wind, the rustling of the leaf, the murmur of the brook; men whose simple joys were the chase of the stag, and the light in the dark eye of a maiden." The truth of the matter is that Grey's novels can countenance Wetzel's slaughter of the redskins because in the novels the Indians are, as Timothy Weasel believed, only critters, perhaps eternally so.

Another way of saying the same thing is to point out that each of the novels opens with the arrival on the Ohio frontier of a young woman from back East. In Betty Zane she is Betty herself; in The Spirit of the Border it is a

pair of sisters, Nell and Kate Wells; in The Last Trail it is Helen Sheppard. Except for Kate, each of the young women meets immediately the man she is to marry at the end of the novel. And each, not excepting Kate, is also seen immediately by the renegade white man who will attempt to steal her away to live with him among the savages. Finally, again except for Kate, each young woman is rescued, not by her future husband, but by Lewis Wetzel. Poor Kate has to embody the opposite and awful alternative: she is stolen away and raped repeatedly by a renegade white man; her only escape is to go insane and die.

The point is not so much that each novel has the same plot, though that is a point worth making, but that each novel is about a white woman threatened, not so much by Indians as by a white man who has rejected the restraints of his culture. "Young feller, don't go wrong," says Wetzel in the second novel; "I'll allow Indians is bad enough; but I never heard tell of one abusin' a white woman, as mayhaps you mean. Injuns marry white women sometimes; kill an' scalp 'em often, but that's all. It's men of our own color, renegades like this Girty, as do worse'n murder."

Whatever may be the truth of how Indians on the Ohio frontier in the 1780's treated captive white women (Wetzel certainly seems to have forgotten his dead sisters here), Zane Grey's villains are not Indians but those white men who have "become even worse than Indians." His Simon Girty has "failed among his own people," won "a great position in an alien race," and loves "to sway men--Indians, if not others--to his will." And Girty's brothers are even worse: George has "so sunk his individuality into the savage's" that he is "no longer a white man"; while Jim stalks "the borderland with a bloody tomahawk, his long arm outstretched to clutch some unfortunate white woman, and with his hideous smile of death."

Grey's Indians, then, are only agents. If they do not rape white women, it is because they are less than men: they are only a part of the wilderness. Against a background of Indians, as against a background of trees, Lewis Wetzel fights to protect the white virgins from the Girtys. In one almost archetypal scene near the end of Betty Zane, Wetzel stands at a breach in the fort, cutting down Indians to the left and to the right with the settler's most basic tool, the axe. "Just then Wetzel in all his horrible glory was a sight to freeze the marrow of any man. He had cast aside his hunting shirt in that run to the fence and was now stripped to the waist. He was covered with blood. The muscles of his broad back and his brawny arms swelled and rippled under the brown skin. At every swing of the gory axe he let out a yell. . . ." He fells the warriors as the pioneers clear the forests because in Zane Grey's first three novels the Indians are like trees.

Furthermore, if the virgins and the virgin land are the same, then the land was never the Indian's; it was always white. In Grey's version of American history, the white virgin and the virgin land may be contended for by white men; but the Indian is fated to pass as is the buffalo. To the Indian, the violent arrival of Wetzel is the violent arrival of white civilization; it is truly le vent de la mort.

IV

In The Spirit of the Border, James Downs, the brother of the Joseph Downs we saw rescued earlier, is a Christian missionary to the Indians. The Christianity he preaches, however, is hardly muscular; and it, more than anything, explains Grey's romanticizing of Lewis Wetzel.

"Christianity is love," Jim Downs tells the Indians. "If you will love the Great Spirit you will love your wives, your children, your brothers, your friends, your foes--you will love the palefaces. No more will you idle in winter and wage wars in summer. You will wear your knife and tomahawk only when you hunt for meat. You will be kind, gentle, loving, virtuous--you will have grown wise. When your days are done you will meet all your loved ones in the beautiful forest. There, where the flowers bloom, the fruits ripen always, where the pleasant water glides and the summer winds whisper sweetly, there peace will dwell forever."

There, in that happy hunting ground called heaven, although Jim Downs does not say so, is the only place the Indian will ever recover the beautiful forest he had before the arrival of the white man. More to the point, what Zane Grey really believes about this sermon is what several of the settlers try to tell Preacher Downs, that the border is not yet ready for the religion of love. Christianity will come, as will the civilization for which it is an appropriate religion, but for now it is a philosophy insufficient for dealing with the likes of the Girtys. To underscore this point, the novel's first climax is the massacre (in Grey's version, by Indians led by the Girtys) of the Christian Indians at the Moravian Mission of Gnaddenhutten (the Village of Peace).

The novel's second and more important climax is no less than a sort of reverse Crucifixion, but a proper presentation of it requires a preliminary remark or two. In The Spirit of the Border, the Girty most villainous is brother, James, who wanders the borderland seeking white women whom he may devour. He is the one who carries off Kate Wells and so maltreats her that she is fortunate to escape by dying. He has similar designs upon Kate's sister, Nell, but his plots are foiled, not by James Downs, whom Nell eventually marries, but by Lewis Wetzel.

Wetzel is given the job of rescuing virgins because he is good at it. But he is good at it precisely because he is no Christian, because the religion of love is meaningless to him, because he hates and enjoys killing Indians and white men who are worse than Indians. Early in The Spirit of the Border, after Wetzel has lost his rifle in an escape from Indians, one of the missionaries offers him another: "I have no use for a weapon with which to destroy God's creatures. My brother was a frontiersman; he left this rifle to me. I remember hearing him say once that if a man knew exactly the weight of lead and powder needed, it would shoot absolutely true." After Wetzel uses the rifle to knock a turtle off a floating log at a hundred and fifty yards, he agrees: "Your brother spoke the truth, an' I thank you for the rifle." In that this missionary is the uncle and only guardian of Kate and Nell Wells, he will have more use for Wetzel as a weapon with which to destroy God's creatures than he now anticipates; and what Wetzel is thanking him for is no less than society's sanctioning of his murderous role.

Wetzel's appointment to his role is made quite clear in the novel when George Young, the missionary whom Kate Wells would have married, catches him by the arm. "Wetzel, listen," he says: "I am a teacher of God's word . . . but in this moment, preacher as I am, I would give all I have or hope to have, all the little good I may have done, all my life, to be such a man as you. For I would avenge the woman I loved. To torture, to kill Girty! I am only a poor, weak fellow who would be lost a mile from this village, and if not, would fall before the youngest brave. But you with your glorious strength, your imcomparable woodcraft, you are the man to kill Girty. Rid the frontier of this fiend. Kill him! Wetzel, kill him! . . . Trail him like a bloodhound, and when you find him remember my broken heart, remember Nell, remember, oh, God! remember poor Kate!"

Wetzel, we are told, "spoke never a word. He stretched out his long, brawny arm and gripped the young missionary's shoulder. His fingers clasped hard. . . . And then, as he stood, the softer look faded slowly from his face. A ripple seemed to run over his features, which froze, as it subsided, into a cold, stone rigidity."

Late in the novel, Wetzel rescues Nell Wells from Girty, who, still covered with bloodstains from the Moravian Massacre, has just torn "open her dress, exposing her beautiful white shoulder and bosom." Wetzel slams him against a tree and drives his knife "into Girty's groin, through flesh and bone, hard and fast into the tree." In a terrible reversal of the Crucifixion, Wetzel nails the villain to the tree and leaves him for the buzzards.

The justification for Girty's punishment is not just the irony of a rapist hung up by the groin. As Girty watches the buzzards circle closer and closer, he remembers his boyhood, his mother, and his home. "All his youth, all his manhood flashed before him. The long, bloody, merciless years faced him, and his crimes crushed upon him with an awful might. . . . Girty was sweating blood. It trickled from his ghastly face. . . . He, the renegade, the white Indian, the Deathshead of the frontier, panted and prayed for a merciful breath. He was exquisitely alive. He was human." Christ died upon the cross to prove himself also a man; Girty has to hang his hours upon that tree so that he may learn before he dies that he was not a god.

V

"Revenge is sweet; but it is not wise," James Downs tells the Indians in his sermon. "The price of revenge is blood and life." In each of these novels, Lewis Wetzel does pay, not only the price of blood, but also the price of life--he remains alone at the end.

In Betty Zane, it is just possible that Betty's love "could have reclaimed him, could have put an end to that solitary wandering." She does manage, by holding on with both arms and pleading, to keep him from killing a man who tried to kiss her at a dance. Afterwards, however, the man turns renegade and tries to kidnap Betty, and so Wetzel has to kill him anyway. The way of life on the border is so dangerous that Wetzel could not settle down if he wanted to. What Wetzel finally does for Betty's sake is what he does for every settler's sake: He uses his rifle. Twice Betty tries to coax him out of the

shadows and to the dance, but she can do no more than persuade him to take a turn or two around the floor. "Fightin' redskins is somethin' I can't help," he says. "If I got married the fever would come on and I'd leave home. No, I'm no good for a woman. Fightin' is all I'm good for."

As Leslie Fiedler overstated it some years ago, the only love open to Wetzel is that of a friend, a companion, another borderman. In The Spirit of the Border, Joseph Downs, who is the opposite of his brother Jim, goes away with Wetzel into the woods. "Strange as it may appear this lonely, stern Indian-hunter and the reckless, impulsive boy were admirable suited for companionship. . . . Wedded as Wetzel was to the forest trails, to his lonely life, to the Nemesis-pursuit he had followed for eighteen long years, he was still . . . capable of affection. . . . The dark caverns of Wetzel's great heart opened, admitting to their gloomy depths this stranger. So now a new love was born in that cheerless heart, where for so long a lonely inmate, the ghost of old love, had dwelt in chill seclusion."

But Joe Downs is killed, and in The Last Trail, Jonathan Zane, Wetzel's only other occasional companion in the wilds, is wooed away by Helen Sheppard. "Go out upon your last trail," she whispers, "and come back to me."

"An' let Wetzel go always alone?"

"He is different; he lives only for revenge. What are those poor savages to you? You have a better, nobler life opening."

Johathan Zane does as he is asked, and so Wetzel is left alone. At the end of The Spirit of the Border, Wingenund, one of Wetzel's great Indian foes, becomes a Christian, and Wetzel, to his horror, is unable to shoot him. "He lowered the long black rifle. He took one last look at the chieftain's dark powerful face. Then the Avenger fled like a shadow through the forest." If the Indians become Christians, then civilization has arrived, and the wonderfully choreographed and effortless violence of Deathwind is no longer necessary. The Indians have become too human, and they never were as evil as the bad white men. So, deserted even by his enemies, Wetzel's cry becomes in truth "the wail of a lost soul."

According to the Dictionary of American Biography, Lewis Wetzel lived out his days near Natchez, Mississippi. But Zane Grey's myth, for whom Wetzel is just the first of many names, fled even further west. He became those lonely gunfighters in Grey's other novels, and he became all the copies of those gunfighters, all the wounded sons of Cain who are unable to heed the small boy's cry, "Come back, Shane."

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An Approach to Teaching Fiction

by

Hershel H. Craft

Fiction--novels and short stories--are all around us in everyday life--in television, radio, motion pictures, newspapers, magazines, and jukebox ballads--not just entombed in anthologies or in books in the library. To introduce a piece of fiction, a teacher might very well discuss certain presentations currently seen or read. Dull teaching and a poor choice of selections to teach are the surest ways of guaranteeing that students will remain at the television level of fiction. All television fiction is not bad, however, nor is all in books good, but the highest rewards of fiction come from that written by serious authors and read by serious students.

How to instruct students to read fiction poses special problems for the teacher. Many students (and adults for that matter) read only for "the story," or just for the literal sequence of events. They tend to read all stories in the same way, and if the given story does not jibe with their way of thinking about what a story should be, they are likely to complain that they "don't get it" or that they "don't like it." High school students are frequently baffled by certain modern fiction of the highly symbolic or elliptical variety. (For instance, in Hemingway's short story, "The Killers," Hemingway is not interested in presenting a plot of action but in pointing out the pervading evil in the world. The psychological plot of the story involves Nick Adams' traumatic rendezvous with evil, making the last line of the story just right: "Well, you better not think about it.")

Studying the Plot

In the junior high school the students can learn the various purposes that fiction may have; as, (1) simply to entertain through a funny, exciting, or unusual story; (2) to present some serious idea about life; (3) to satirize or burlesque something; (4) to create some kind of effect or impression; (5) to portray or dramatize an emotion; (6) to present an insight into a person's character. In the senior high school, the student should learn something of the way in which the traditions of realism, romanticism, and naturalism have affected fiction, and he should have some experience with historical, sociological, propaganda, and psychological fiction. The mature student will reject improbability and too much coincidence in what he reads, recognizing that in good fiction there must be a basis of cause and effect in happenings. A good study question for such mature students might be this: Was there any preparation for this happening, any reason for it in what has gone before, or did this happen purely by chance or coincidence? The literary matter of "foreshadowing" is the point here. After reading a "surprise ending" study by O. Henry, students may enjoy looking back over the story to see whether the writer purposely led them astray in order to trick them at the end or whether the surprise ending could grow logically out of the story.

Reading for Deeper Meanings

The process of learning to think with literary material develops gradually through the junior and senior high school years--but it can develop. Immature readers must be led to look beneath the surface of happenings for implied (or symbolic) meanings that is. Even in maturely written short stories, the reader sometimes has to infer the time or place, and it may be most important that he do this. Stories of the Far North, the desert, the tropics, for example, with obvious clues to settings, will provide training for pupils in making this type of inference. This training will make it easier for them to handle more subtle clues later.

In making characterizations, a variety of clues can also be used advantageously. According to J.N. Hook in THE TEACHING OF HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH there are nine basic methods of revealing a character: They are:

(1) Telling what kind of person he is.
(2) Describing the person, his clothing and his environment.
(3) Showing his actions.
(4) Letting him talk.
(5) Relating his thoughts.
(6) Showing how other people talk to him.
(7) Showing what other people say about him.
(8) Showing how other people react because of him.
(9) Showing how he reacts to others.

It is important for the teacher to point out the close relationship of characters and events in mature fiction. Certain traits of certain characters lead to events.

An author's central meaning or theme in a piece of fiction may be dependent upon such devices as irony, satire, and allegory. In addition to explaining these devices, the teacher needs to provide practice in reading material in which they are used, material appropriate to the student's level of awareness.

Selecting novels for class study should be done with care. Any novel chosen should furnish a profitable experience for the class as a whole--providing opportunities for the able without being incomprehensible or unrewarding to pupils at the lower ranges of ability.

In order to give practical help to choosing novels at various grade levels, I suggest the list at the end of this article. The writer believes that the majority if not all of these are available in paperback.

Students' experiences in intensive class study of the novel are crucial because these experiences--and there is time but for a few of them--will be the milestones toward perceptive reading of the mature novel.

The more our students read, the more they will develop in reading skill. Extensive reading is always effective.

To keep each of our students faithful, nothing will be so effective as a brief quiz at the beginning of each literature lesson. Four or five simple short-answer questions can do the job. Read them aloud to the class with a brief pause for the writing of each answer. This is the place for the factual, for details of plot, for recall of the obvious--not for the thought-provoking questions which belong in an analytical discussion.

Henry Fielding said, "Every book ought to be read with the same spirit and in the same manner as it was written." Unfortunately, this is always partially impossible because of the passage of time and changes of fashion.

Henry James, author of the PORTRAIT OF A LADY, describes the novel as the "most independent, the most elastic, the most prodigious of literary forms." It is also the most popular of literary forms.

Reading novels, like reading any other literature, is a creative act, a collaboration between reader and writer. If we can surrender to all that a writer can give, we can then be alert to questions, to argue, to disagree.

Seventh Grade

(1) Buck, Pearl, THE BIG WAVE.
(2) Henry, Marguerite, KING OF THE WIND
(3) Knight, Eric, LASSIE COME HOME
(4) Krumgold, Joseph, AND NOW MIGUEL

Eighth Grade

(1) London, Jack, CALL OF THE WILD
(2) Stevenson, Robert Louis, TREASURE ISLAND
(3) Street, James, GOODBYE, MY LADY
(4) Twain, Mark, TOM SAWYER
(5) Ullman, James Ramsey, BANNER IN THE SKY

Ninth Grade

(1) Schaefer, Jack, SHANE
(2) Richter, Conrad, LIGHT IN THE FOREST
(3) Gipson, Fred, OLD YELLER
(4) Kipling Rudyard, CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS
(5) Forbes, Esther, JOHNNY TREMAIN

Tenth Grade

(1) Steinbeck, John, THE PEARL
(2) Hemingway, Ernest, THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA
(3) Welty, Eudora, THE PONDER HEART
(4) Annixter, Paul, SWIFTWATER
(5) Knowles, John, A SEPARATE PEACE

Eleventh Grade

(1) Fitzgerald, F. Scott, THE GREAT GATSBY
(2) Sinclair, Upton, THE JUNGLE
(3) Norris, Frank, MCTEAGUE
(4) Lee, Harper, TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
(5) Faulkner, William, THE BEAR

Twelfth Grade

(1) Paton, Alan, CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY
(2) Conrad, Joseph, HEART OF DARKNESS
(3) Golding, William, THE LORD OF THE FLIES
(4) Bronte, Emily, WUTHERING HEIGHTS
(5) Huxley, Aldous, BRAVE NEW WORLD

Chillicothe High School
Chillicothe

Continuing Column by Sue Holt

TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

This Issue: Teaching Junior Novels

Junior novels are just grand! I really enjoy reading them, and I would love to use them in my class, but what am I to do? Those kids I have in the basic group can hardly read their names written in front of them. How can you expect me to teach them a novel?

Haven't you heard this before? If not, you haven't been listening. A year ago, I said it myself but then decided to give it a try and find out just what could be done with a group of twenty-four eighth grade students reading at fifth grade levels or lower, eighteen of them boys who saw no advantage whatsoever to reading a book, and a junior novel or two. Let me rephrase that last group of words. It should read, "seven novels or so." As I began this experiment, I assumed we would read just a novel or two and then move on to something else. However, the project turned into the reading and discussing of seven books and the inclusion of a wide range of language arts activities. Thus, the initial idea of reading a junior novel to the class evolved into a much greater language arts experience that was enjoyable and rewarding to us all and that ended only because the school year itself drew to a close. Let me tell you how, in our eighth grade class of slower readers and of students who were wholly disinterested in the literature anthology stories they could not read, we used the junior novel as a textbook and studied our literature lessons in a painless way.

Before describing our program using the junior novel, I should confess that we did not approach our study in any conventional manner. We did not have take-home assignments; we did not hold any intellectual literary discussions; and, we did not try learning long lists of vocabulary words. On the other hand, we did not use those fresh, highly-praised approaches that make learning so successful. There was no small group work, no prepared packets of individualized learning supplies, and no long book reports even though all of these things are important aspects of instruction. The work that we did, we did together as a large group; and, because there were few extra demands on the teacher, I was free to enjoy our junior novels, too.

A second confession to be made is that this was not a project fully thought out and prepared ahead of time: it rose from necessity. The class met every day for three periods, or two hours and fifteen minutes, at a time. It is very difficult to change class activities and tempo often enough to keep the attention of these slower learners. However, we had just had a student teacher for three months, and he and I working together had managed the task pretty well. But, when the university quarter ended, and I was the only one left, I realized I had to have something extra to keep the students interested. This something extra had to capture and hold their attention as well as provide opportunities for doing a wide range of learning activities. The answer to this problem, though I did not realize at the time what a good answer it would be, was the junior novel. Since the junior novel experiment proved so successful for us, I have decided to outline our major activities and record the discussion questions so they could be used by everyone else who needs some exciting "extra" for his class.

The first thing that we did in the junior novel project was to review a basic list of literary terms that we had been working with all year. These terms were: hero, heroine, villain, setting, conflict, climax, conclusion, theme, origin, sequel, point of view, fiction, non-fiction, biography, autobiography, and plausibility. Always, we worked on these terms with respect to meaning, spelling, and their relationship to the story.

The second thing done was the passing around for student inspection of a copy of S.E. Hinton's The Outsiders. The characters depicted on the front jacket and the characters sitting in my classroom were identical in appearance, and the book was a hit before I had read page one. The Outsiders was read orally to the class at the rate of two chapters a day. That is approximately as long as one voice can read before it gives out. Before reading a particular chapter, I would write discussion questions for it on the board. The students were to copy these questions and then listen for the answers as I read. In this way, we practiced both note-taking and listening skills. We spent almost an hour of our block of time reading and discussing the book. If one of the writing activities came up, we took extra time to work on it. After the book had been read, a test was given. Students were permitted to use their notes for this test provided they had been able to show me a completed set of notes the day before. It was great to hear some of them brag as they handed in their tests that they hadn't even used their notes. They had been interested enough in what we were doing to listen and learn as we read each day. Through the daily note-taking, we had been practicing reading skills, and I tried to use essentially the same wording on the tests as was used in the notes. Even so, there were three students who could not read the tests. These three were orally tested at a later time.

Two advantages of the junior novel experiment showed up by the time we had finished The Outsiders. First of all, attendance improved. Secondly, students who did miss a day would ask to borrow our extra copy of the book and at least try to read what they had missed. For a few, this was the first attempt at making up work all year. On the test for this novel, I asked the students whether they wanted to use another one, and there was a one-hundred per cent response of "Yes." It dawned on me at about this time that these were students who probably were not going to voluntarily pick up a book and read it. They were also people who had never been read to except by elementary teachers, and those days were over. Therefore, any enjoyment they would get from my classroom, and I decided that as long as they were sincerely interested in using, listening to, or reading junior novels, that wealth of literature was here to stay.

We used three other adolescent novels in this way. They were That Was Then, This Is Now, The Prince of Central Park, and Member of the Gang. Although I had not really planned it that way, each of these novels had an adolescent male as its main character, and my boys would patiently work on their other assignments so they could be ready for the daily adventures of our current hero. The findings of Robert Emans and Gloria Patyk in their reading interest survey certainly rang true for my class. These two propose that "it is the poor readers who seek opportunities for identification in reading" (Journal of Reading, February 1967, pp. 300-301). My group of slower readers began to identify more and more with the characters in our books and to discuss their own similar problems. The experts of adolescent literature are also correct when they say that teenage girls will read books written for

boys, while boys will rarely read a book for girls. After I realized that our novels had all featured male characters, I asked the girls in the class whether they objected. They answered that they did not, and that they would even prefer to continue reading books about boys as long as the stories were as interesting as the ones we had already read. I am quite sure, that had circumstances been reversed, the boys would not have been so agreeable.

With these additional three books that I read orally, we also incorporated note-taking, listening, reading, writing, and cognitive skills. However, students were no longer permitted to use notes for the tests, and the note-taking and related activities became daily assignments rather than things the whole class did together. In other words, each student was responsible for copying the chapter questions and listening for and writing down the answers without any help from the teacher. These were sometimes graded when completed. The process served as a means for turning over to the students some of the responsibility for learning and made them more dependent upon themselves.

This particular group of students insisted that they did not care as much for That Was Then, This Is Now as they did for The Outsiders. The reason some of them gave was the inclusion of certain language used when Mike took Connie home to her all-black neighborhood, and she then encouraged her friends to "kill the white bastard". When I pointed out to the students that they sometimes used language very similar to this, they decided there must be something more they objected to. After some further discussion, we agreed that none of us cares very much for a character who turns on the one who helps him, or who reveals prejudice, or who refuses to get along with another human. This became one of those wonderful instances when a problem in a junior novel evolves into a consideration of some universal theme basic to the literary and human experience.

The third book that I read orally, The Prince of Central Park, was received in an entirely different way. We first discussed the necessity for using the imagination when reading certain kinds of stories, and then it didn't matter at all whether a young adolescent could plausibly survive the winter in a treehouse. The two stories are so similar that the next time I use this novel, I will follow it with a reading of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. While we were reading The Prince of Central Park, one of the students remarked about the resemblances between Jay-Jay and his attempts to survive and the great chief Geronimo and his battle for survival. At the same time that I was reading The Prince of Central Park to the class, we were reading the book Geronimo as a substitute for our history text, and there were indeed striking similarities between the characters of these two books. This consideration added a dimension of literary comparison to our project, and because it had been student-initiated, it was a much more significant dimension than it might have been.

All members of the class said they had been in predicaments similar to those Woodie faces in Member of the Gang. Woodie's problem is one basic to adolescent life: he has to decide whether to go along with the gang or stand up for what he feels is right. Woodie, like my students, desperately wanted to be accepted by the group. But, at the same time, he realized that acceptance might lead to very serious trouble. I will not deny the fact that I entertained some notion of bibliotherapy as we read these novels, and Member of the Gang was well-suited to this purpose. The book was contributed by a student who had purchased it in elementary school and never really been able to read it.

The other three books that we used in our junior novel experiment were Geronimo, The Pearl, and Monkeys, Go Home. We had a class set of each of these books, so we approached our reading of them in a somewhat different manner. One factor central to all three studies, however, was volunteer reading by students. There are many educators who frown on round-robin reading, but I have found it to be very successful with eighth grade students, even those who do not read well. They tend to choose a paragraph of about the length and complexity they can manage, wave a hand violently, and become quite upset if they are not permitted to read that particular selection. Every student in the class volunteered to read at one time or another. Our librarian had chosen these books because of their modified vocabularies; they were on easier reading levels; and, most of the students could read them. I realized again by the time we were through with the three books that there is a great deal of merit in round-robin reading. If all the students could learn to pronounce and understand a certain word as we came to it, that word had actually been added to twenty-four reading vocabularies.

While using the novel Geronimo, I wanted to emphasize oral reading skills rather than make the students overly concerned about locating answers to study questions. Thus, I listed the page numbers where the answers would be found. However, by doing this, I inadvertently reinforced their skills for skimming, so I omitted page numbers with the other two books. We were also able to incorporate some reporting with our study of Geronimo. These students perceived Geronimo as the underdog in his struggle for existence, and they empathized with him strongly.

The second book that we read together was The Pearl, and we all became so engrossed with it that we did not take time to practice many other skills. In fact, several days we read when we should have been covering certain other curriculum concerns. I have a strange notion, though, that if someone is intimately involved with a book, he should on occasion be permitted to "drop out" of routine activities to read. So, on several occasions, we simply all "dropped out" together. Our main concern in this study became that of theme, and the students were able to find in The Pearl the themes from our other books. It became the highlight of our reading experience and, in many ways, the core of my bibliotherapy attempt. Juana and Kino were outsiders as were the central characters from the other books, as were the majority of my students for one reason or another. Juana and Kino were subject to various forms of prejudice just like the other characters and my students. Juana and Kino had chosen a way of life they thought best for them and, like the others, plunged into a battle for survival. Before the story concludes, these two show us some results of the fierce battle for existence. Kino becomes hard like Dally and Mark and Elmo and the young Geronimo. Juana is more resigned like Pony, Bryon, Woodie, the older Indian chief, and even Jay-Jay at times. Juana and Kino, however, do not leave us with the feeling that things have been settled. The students were not ready for the story to end with the last page, so we tried to imagine what life still held for these two. We also discussed the aspect of responsibility for the problems Juana and Kino encountered and how much control they really had over the events in their lives. Of course, we were exploring, indirectly, some very basic literary and social concepts that date back to Plato and his Republic. I would have to testify at this point in behalf of those experts of adolescent literature who claim teaching a junior novel is good preparation for teaching a literary classic. After our readings of the junior novels I have already mentioned, the students were capable of finding similar themes and of discussing The Pearl in more depth. I suspect this was one of the reasons for its great popularity.

The last book that we read, we read just for fun and because there were enough copies for all of us. It was the short and simple Monkeys, Go Home based on a former television series, The Monkeys. Students were required to make their own notes for this book, so we practiced outlining skills. At the end of the reading, each person had to submit one question for our test. The class responded well to this assignment and like the idea of a student-made test. The school year and the reading of Monkeys, Go Home ended simultaneously.

It has been over four months now since our junior novel experiment ended, and I have very little to offer as a follow-up evaluation of the program. I doubt seriously whether any of these people have moved up the intellectual ladder into an appreciation of the classics. None of them were placed in college preparatory classes, so this really doesn't matter. What does matter at least to me, is that most of them have stopped by this year to inquire what we were reading. They remembered! And, out of all the preparation I put into lessons for social studies problems, grammar exercises, vocabulary development sentences, and far-out ideas to lure these people into learning, it was the relatively short time I spent working with adolescent literature that was most beneficial. The books that we used, however, are not just for slower-reading eighth grade students. Each of them explores some universal theme, and brings the reader into a close relationship with a character he can identify with. Many educators opposed to adolescent works as a part of the literature program fail to consider that all literature is centered around a relatively short list of themes. These themes are basic to life and, for the most part, apply to all people of all ages. Yet, to be appreciated and internalized, these lessons must be presented in a style and a language which the reader can understand. For some of our more mature teenage readers, this style and language may be that of the literary classics. For my students, it was not. Our junior novels met the students where they were in a manner they could relate to and provided them with both an exciting and a successful learning experience. Some of them will never read a great classic. For some, it will be enough that they simply discovered reading can be fun and they pick up another junior novel and enjoy it. Unfortunately, many may never even try another reading if they have to do it on their own. For these, the book of their life might well be one they encountered in our eighth grade literature experiment. Even if this were the only positive result of the whole experiment, then I would consider the program to have been a great success.

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Member of the Gang by Barbara Rinkoff, Scholastic Book Services, 1970 and 1975.

Monkeys, Go Home, adapted by Mel Cebulash from Walt Disney production based on book The Monkeys by C.K. Wilkinson, Scholastic Book Services, 1967.

That Was Then, This Is Now, by S.E. Hinto, Dell, 1971.

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton, Dell, 1967.

The Pearl by John Steinbeck, Viking Press, 1965. (13th edition)

The Prince of Central Park by Evan H. Rhodes, Simon and Shuster, 1976.

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Continuing Column by Dixon Otto

A STUDENT'S VIEW ON GENERATING WRITING

This Issue: Powerful Descriptions

Let's begin looking at the mechanics of writing. The student should be interested in writing and in improving his writing. If not, the teacher still can help instill that interest. Play around with comparisons: Have each student make up a comparison for a specific object (an object interesting to the students). Then let them compare and discuss what they come up with. I think you'll find that some students who thought they couldn't write come up with very beautiful comparisons.

The most powerful writing comes when the descriptions are powerful. This does not mean that a description has to be grand or that a setting has to be unique. A setting can be powerful because it conveys the emotion of the scene. No one in a horror story visits a grave yard at noon on a bright, sunny day when all the birds are chirping. A description can be powerful because it presents a common object in a new light:

The slime-green walls,
with cracked plaster
crumbling away,
were spider webs
closing in on me.

You will notice two elements in this great work of art I have just created. First, the wall is described in some detail. Second, a metaphor (the indirect comparison of the wall with a spider web) is used.

Detail makes an object or scene come alive. The only way to write detailed descriptions is to observe objects in detail. To see takes effort. Can you close your eyes and describe the room around you in detail? Probably not. The only way to develop a perceptive eye is to work at it. Work at looking at a scene, then turning away and describing it as if to a blind person. When you see someone, try to catalogue their gestures and movements.

A very good book to read on seeing is Annie Dillard's Pilgram at Tinker Creek (Bantam, 1975). She describes two states of seeing. Normally, as she walks, she'll describe what she's seeing to herself as if she were a radio announcer. Then when she sees something very special, she becomes passive and lets the scene carry her along.

Soon you will find that an easy way to describe something is to compare it to something else. Simile (a direct comparison usually using like or as) or metaphor do more than just describe an object. A good comparison can ignite a dull, dark scene. Look at the difference between the following two descriptions:

They danced vigorously.
They danced like dust devils on a field.

In a comparison two separate images are brought together, one helping bring the other alive. Where are these comparisons hidden? Again, you must expend energy to look at an object from every angle. And look at the setting the object is in. Many times the best images for comparisons can be found near the object. Or you can play Freud and list whatever comes into your mind until you run across a good comparison. But don't push it; stay relaxed.

Bringing a scene alive is hard. No one can teach you how. When you see an interesting object or scene, the word "like" should pop into your head. You should always be looking for a good comparison. If you use your eyes, look around even when you are not trying to write, you will build up a reservoir of images that will bring many a scene to life.

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Continuing Column by Sally Hale

TEACHING ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS

This Issue: Creative Writing

Preconceived attitudes concerning poetry, on the part of both children and teachers, often create a real stumbling block in writing verse. One way to eliminate this stumbling block is through teaching an old, yet little known form -- cinquain.

The first part of the word cinquain means the number five, in French and Spanish. This refers to the fact that cinquain poetry has five lines.

Line 1 -- 2 syllables
Line 2 -- 4 syllables
Line 3 -- 6 syllables
Line 4 -- 8 syllables
Line 5 -- 2 syllables

Children should not begin to write too quickly. Show some examples after introduction and write a group poem. Stress the idea that this type of poetry attempts to reflect the inner feelings of the author.

Results of such a lesson are often astonishing. These poems were written by fifth grade students.

Oh gosh!
They're after me!
I've got the football now.
So they're supposed to tackle me!
It hurts.
--Russ Ebeling

My leaves!
They were in piles.
I had just raked them up.
Now they are all over the yard.
Poor me!
--Julie Duncan

Oh no!
Where are my leaves?
Where, oh where, are my leaves?
I shall have to search the trees now.
Oh dear!
--Scott Oehrlein

Come on!
It's Halloween.
Let's sing and dance around.
We will see witches with switches
And . . . BOO!!
--Ann MacRae

Tigers
Are number one!
Like to beat other teams.
Happy about every touchdown.
Tough cats!
--Doug Smith

Horses.
Mammals with hair.
Love to buck and gallop.
Like to eat grain, apples, and hay.
Equines.
--Julie McDaniel

Stallion
Is big and strong
Runs like a thunderbolt.
Lives in the midst of peace and joy.
Wild steed.
--Lori Gibson

My pups.
They love to play.
They like to play outside.
They growl when they are very mad.
Puppies.
--Katrina Blair

Eagles
Soar through the air.
Love to eat mice for food.
Wondering if their kind will end.
Big birds.
--Tom Forrester

Big clouds.
They take up space.
Stay up there in the sky.
Rain on top of people and cars.
Cotton.
--Jane Etter

Another poetry form that is relatively easy for children is the fourteenth century Korean form -- the sijo. This was produced by the Yi Dynasty during a period of a kind of "renaissance" for developments in science, industry, literature and the arts.

The original form consists of three lines with fourteen to sixteen syllables in a line, with a total of no more than 45 syllables in the poem. In the English translation, sijo is written in six short lines, each line containing six to eight syllables.

By using this form, the child can explore meaningful thoughts and experiment with colorful language without having to make lines rhyme. Many ancient sijo were created about nature and the seasons.

Cattails wiggle in the wind
Like jiggling toes in cold shoes.
Cold as snow, frozen like ice
On the sidewalks of Maine.
Wrap them in a warm blanket.
I hate cold toes. Do you?
--Gay Hendrickson

Quickly falls the clear, clear rain.
Clear as crystals, clear as glass.
Clear as silver and clear as ice
On every window pane.
Play in it! Have fun in it!
Lots of people do not like it.
--Angie Kerr

Thanksgiving is coming soon.
A lot of good food and drinks.
Thanking God for what He's done.
Eating together and blessing.
Watching parades and singing, too.
Celebrations, everywhere!
--Sherri Goudy

Quickly the wind passes by me.
It slashes and whips the trees.
It hurts the people not prepared
For they yell and run and scream.
But on a hot summer day
The wind is welcome always!
--Joanne Love

Oh my trees are gone for winter
To escape from the freezing snow!
I don't know why they fell asleep.
Their leaves fell a month ago.
I think they will be back for spring.
Then I'll be happy with the trees.
--Dick Swan

The rain falls down out of the sky.
It falls into the puddle.
It fills up the sand pail.
I will put up my umbrella
And go out into the shower.
I'll get wet, but I don't care.
--Lisa Jackson

I got up. The sun was bright.
It was looking in my window.
It looked like a pot of gold.
The roosters crowed from the barn door.
The cows were eating their good hay.
Today was a very good day.
--Bruce Clarida

Grab-Bag Stories

Each child is given four pieces of paper. On the first one he designates a place; on the second he writes a time; on the third and fourth he briefly describes two characters.

Place the slips of paper in three bags labeled WHERE, WHEN, and WHO. Shake the bags to mix the contents thoroughly. Each child draws a time, a place, and two characters. This is the framework for his creative story.

The following story was written from this framework:

WHO: King Kong, a monster
the only pink polka-dotted dog alive in the world

WHEN: the present

WHERE: Hickey, West Virginia

King Kong's Second Attack
by Denah Davis

Now for the big news story, folks, here from Station WJKL. King Kong made his second attack today. This time the Empire State Building caved in when he stood on top of it. During his first attack he weakened the building greatly and the steel beams have been shaking ever since. Even here in Hickey, West Virginia, we could feel the ground shake for twenty minutes after he hit the sidewalk in New York. The shaking was so severe that the world's only pink polka-dotted dog, which lived in Hickey, died of fright.

The whole town is hurrying to clean up their apartments and houses so that they will all be able to go to the polka-dotted dog's funeral. The death of the dog is causing so many things to happen in Hickey that I'm sure the town will be better known after all of this is over.

This is the friendly newscaster of station WJKL signing off.

Nonsense Character Stories

This lesson evolved from a reading lesson where nonsense sentences were used to identify word functions. The nonsense sentences permit the children to identify parts of speech without knowing the meaning of the words. After the children identified the word functions, it was turned into a creative writing lesson by turning the imaginations loose and writing a description of one of the imaginary "things".

The nonsense sentences that were used were these:

1. The argflog jarbed to the carnaloth.
2. On marblow we graffed to the henklum.
3. Delblats trealk to the sirgum.
4. A phanser was sarging in the xylen.
5. The barbly flogot dibbered dorin the unctiful vogen.

The following stories resulted from this endeavor.

The Flogots
by Gay Hendrickson

Once upon a time in the year 87, people still lived in jarbes. But in most jarbes were the barbly flogots. They were a rock group but no one would let them sing and play in their quaby clubs.

Poor Flogots! Everytime they went to the Quash Village, everybody ran to their jarbes, screaming.

One day a man died that owned a quavy club. So the Barbly Flogots bought it. The only things that ever came to the club to see the green, hairy, purple-eyed Flogots were female flogots.

The Barbly Flogot
by Kyp Ross

At one time there were barbly flogots. I suppose you wonder what a barbly flogot looks like. One is 50 feet tall, weighs 500 tons, has 15 arms, 12 legs, 23 eyes, and has warts all over its body.

A barbly flogot mostly just sits around doing nothing. Sometimes he swims or he might even build a 52-foot sandcastle. I've looked back in time and seen one. His dinner table would be spread with fifteen cows, twelve pigs, and 50 gallons of ice cream for dessert.

He lives by the ocean and on the other side of the hill there is a place that he likes to go to for sleeping because it is quiet there. He even lives there sometimes.

He associates with the Coomensay people most of the time. Sometimes he goes around with the Aerie people. They seem to be the only ones who understand him.

The Marblow
by Michael Cornwell

A marblow is a green monster-like thing with blue and white eyes, green arms and legs, and a mouth. He is about six feet tall. He likes animals and animals seem to like him.

He does a lot of jumping and hopping around. He is scared of humans and when he sees one, he disappears. He lives about fifteen feet into the ground. A marblow calls this a henklun, but we would call it a hole.

Once in a while he goes to see his next door neighbor, whose henklun is about fifty miles away. The marblow simply disappears, hops onto a bus and rides over there. After a visit, he always returns to the same olf henklun.

Any child will write, if he is forced. However, forcing often squelches creativity. It is much more exciting when children write willingly because they want to, as was the case with these writings. Elementary children, of course need more guidance than older students, but there is no limit to what they can and will produce in the proper atmosphere.

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